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Celebrity Pg 42

Cruise admits acting goofy

Police frustrated with dealers

DRUGS Over the next few weeks, police will step up patrols at six key city intersections in a bid to keep recently busted drug dealers from getting back to business.

Police also plan to conduct more "compliance checks" to make sure 72 people, allegedly street-level dealers arrested on drug charges since September, are abiding by their bail conditions.

"We bring people to court but once they get out they're committing crimes again," Det.-Sgt. Robert Johnson said yesterday. "That's what's so frustrating for us."

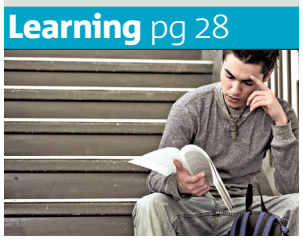
Undercover and uniformed officers laid more than 280 drug-related charges during Stop All Illegal Narcotic Trafficking, or SAINT, a nine-week endeavour to clean up areas of 14 Division, a western swath of the city notorious for drug dealing.

They targeted Lansdowne Avenue at Bloor Street and Queen Street West; Queen and Bathurst streets; King Street at Strachan Avenue and Dufferin Street; and Bloor Street and Ossington Avenue. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Health pg 20

Myths about HIV/AIDS

Learning pg 28



Help at hand for students

Business pg 14

TSX takes a nose-dive

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ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

NDP Leader Jack Layton, left, Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion and Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe listen to a question during a news conference yesterday on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. More coverage, page 6.

A done deal

Liberals, NDP, Bloc sign historic coalition agreement

An historic scene unfolded on Parliament Hill as Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion and NDP Leader Jack Layton signed a formal, unprecedented pact to replace the minority Conservatives.

With guaranteed support from the separatist Bloc Québécois for at least 18 months, the Liberal-led coalition wrote to Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean to offer a governing alternative, claiming the Conservatives have lost the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons.

"We are ready to form a new government that will address the best interests of the people," Dion said after inking the agreement to share power with the New Democratic Party.

"It's all about the economy ... it's why we are together, to fight this economic crisis," Dion said.

But Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservatives say they will fight to hang on to power in the face of an extraordinary opposition move to force them from office. Two senior cabinet ministers emerged after huddling with Harper last night to declare the coalition "undemocratic."

Layton reflected on the sight of three political opponents uniting and said, "Today is politics being done a little differently ... I think it's likely to produce good government."

Dion, who led the Liberals to their worst election showing in a generation on Oct. 14, is now poised to become prime minister under the deal.

Liberal MP Bob Rae said "there is no turning back," as the three parties pledged to defeat the Conservatives at the earliest chance — perhaps next Monday.

The Conservatives could decide to prorogue, or suspend, Parliament and come back with a whole new throne speech and budget in January.

Last night, it was clear the prime minister was seriously considering the option of asking the Governor General to dissolve Parliament and call an election.

But Layton publicly urged Harper to accept his looming defeat "gracefully" and not make moves that create "further instability and delay."

Dion urged the Governor General to call on the coalition to take over.

Now the focus is on what steps Harper — who led the longest surviving minority (937 days) government — could take to save his second minority government, which could enter the history books as the shortest ever: 13 days and counting.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Teetering on the edge

- One Conservative source suggested support for Harper in yesterday's caucus meeting was unanimous, but several admit there is rage within Conservative ranks that mere weeks after winning a strengthened mandate, the party is teetering on the edge of defeat. And much of that fury is directed at Harper himself.

Watch as economic stimulus plays a crucial role in the coalition deal at metronews.ca/Canada

Changing face of child poverty

Toronto suburbs are seeing child poverty increase at an alarming rate, spurred on by population growth that outpaces the social service supports needed to accommodate families moving in, according to a report released today by the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

In areas such as Mississauga, Markham, Richmond Hill, and Oakville, child poverty rates have soared since 1990, closing in on levels once isolated to downtown Toronto, says the report, which used census data from 2006.

"Even though child poverty is not as big numerically (in the 905), the degree of change between 1990 and 2005 is alarming." Colin Hughes

While Toronto child's poverty rate (before taxes) is the highest at 32 per cent, up from 24 per cent in 1990, the suburbs have seen more dramatic increases. Markham jumped to 20 per cent from 8 per cent, and Mississauga has increased to 21 per cent from 12 per cent.

"This report highlights the changing face of child poverty," said David Rivard, executive director of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

"Poverty is so entrenched in the city (Toronto), that it tends to eclipse what's going on elsewhere," said Colin Hughes, a Toronto CAS community development worker and author of the Greater Trouble in Greater Toronto: Child Poverty in the GTA report.

"The community really needs to know it's a big problem elsewhere, too. Even though child poverty is not as big numerically (in the 905), the degree of change between 1990 and 2005 is alarming."

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Citizens' tips help nab hit-and-run suspect
Police say tips from citizens helped them catch a suspect in the hit-and-run of a 32-year-old cyclist on Kipling Avenue south of Albion Road last Wednesday. The car hit the man, turned across several lanes of traffic and drove through a parking lot, police said. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Local

Gas prices to drop below 80 cents

The price of gas will fall below 80 cents per litre at most stations across the Greater Toronto Area, says price watcher and Liberal MP Dan McTeague. McTeague said yesterday prices would fall by four cents per litre overnight to around 77.8 cents. Another source, the website www.torontogasprices.com, said last night that at least 16 stations in the GTA had already dropped prices below the 80-cent threshold. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Tomorrow's Metro

GEMMA PHILLIPS PHOTO

Travel

Maze of stone pillars add to the charm of exploring Western Australia's Pinnacles Desert.

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What's online today.

Watch as economic stimulus plays a crucial role in coalition deal at **metronews.ca/canada**

Read Allan Small's Investment Perspective on how anticipation of automaker bailout buoys North American markets at **metronews.ca/investing**

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These results are not official.

School battle heats up

Parent group hires lobbyist to fight closures

Parents on either side of a decision to close four elementary schools in southeast Oakville have drawn lines over influence and affluence.

One side claims fat-cat rich folks have hired a high-priced Toronto lobbyist to fiddle with the Halton District School Board's plan to close the schools in 2010.

The other side says the board didn't follow proper procedures and it will do whatever it takes to force trustees to hear them out — including paying someone to do battle with Queen's Park on its behalf.

It's an unfair fight, says Michelle Sloane, president of the Clearview Oakville Community Alliance. The group says closing the schools and building a new one will mean better quality education for all students in the area.

Particularly galling, she said, is a boast by Oakville Residents for Public Education of an "impressive war chest" of $50,000 to fund the fight.

"We know the fight cannot be to overturn the decision," Sloane explained. "The only fight, logically, is to delay everything, unless they find some legal hitch (in the process).

"But to hire a lobbyist firm from downtown ... we don't have funding to do that. We have to be our own lobbyist."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Upgrades voted through

• In July, board trustees voted unanimously to upgrade E.J. James and Maple Grove public schools and build a bigger elementary school in the Clearview neighbourhood. The decision means Brantwood, New Central, Linbrook and Chisholm public schools would be closed in September 2010.

Housing urged to sell units to pay for repairs

REPORT Toronto Community Housing should sell about 370 of its low-income units — including 45 single-family homes — to pay for building new units and repairing others, says a long-awaited report on the city agency's $6-billion real estate portfolio. The report also calls for redeveloping five public housing sites and ending the practice of collecting property taxes from the agency. According to documents obtained by the Toronto Star, a 10-year "asset investment strategy" will be presented to the community housing board in coming days.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Weather **A little more chill, a little less snow**

RICHARD LAUTENS/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

A pedestrian walks past a Christmas window on Danforth Avenue in the rain yesterday. Toronto's first major snowstorm of the year didn't look like much yesterday, but Environment Canada is warning that this winter will be colder than the last one, although there will be much less snow.

Strange thefts in east end

BREAK-INS He might grab a cookie off the counter, sip some liquor from the bar, or sneak a snack from your refrigerator. When this thief breaks into a house, he likes to make himself feel at home and he takes his time, investigators said yesterday.

So far, he has struck 40 east-end dwellings and has taken purses, BlackBerrys, cellphones, cash, and anything he can grab easily. But instead of running away, he saunters from the scene of the crime — even if he's caught in the act.

"It's a little out of the ordinary," Det. Dan Powell said.

And now he is distinctive. At one of the last houses he robbed the thief left behind a pair of shoes. Homeowners found the red-trimmed, black and white sneakers outside their dwelling, Powell said.

All the break-ins have occurred in the city's east end — an area bounded by Victoria Park Avenue, Woodbine Avenue, Danforth Avenue and Lake Ontario — but aside from the proximity of his targets, there is no pattern. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Details

• Police are searching for this man, who is described as 6-foot, about 170 pounds with a slim build and dark hair.

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Debit machine fraud plan foiled

A tip that a ring was planning to replace a debit machine pinpad with a device to capture pin numbers at a Whitby gas station has led to the arrest of seven people. Durham police say they watched the men replace the machine and then followed them to a nearby hotel room. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

A history of violence

Man behind Oshawa attack had many run-ins with law

The man who executed a fatal attack on an Oshawa family had a history of violence and spent much of the last decade in and out of courtrooms.

Gino Petralia has been charged with assault on three separate occasions, two in 2004 and one in 1998. He has also faced charges of impaired driving, failure to comply and fail to appear. Most recently, the 47-year-old was arrested in January for causing a disturbance in a public place. He had been scheduled to appear in Oshawa court later this month.

On Saturday, a Durham police officer shot Petralia dead, after the man went on a murderous rampage in a south Oshawa townhouse.

It was around dusk. Leslie and Rick Kelly were celebrating 11-year-old Brandon's birthday, when Petralia stormed the home and began slashing, reportedly attacking the couple's youngest children first. Family friends said three-year-old Nathan and five-year-old Riley were playing downstairs.

"Sometimes we'd see him shovelling the driveway, throwing the snow on the road. Then when he was done, he'd put it back."
Neighbour on Gino Petralia

Nathan is still fighting for his life; 5-year-old Riley remains in hospital with serious injuries. Rick underwent surgery and was also recovering in hospital yesterday.

For about eight years, Petralia lived with his mother. Neighbours said the large family is warm and friendly, but that Petralia was always strange.

"Sometimes we'd see him shovelling the driveway, throwing the snow on the road. Then when he was done, he'd put it back. Stuff like that," said one neighbour. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Police continue to investigate the Oshawa townhouse where Gino Petralia went on a rampage on the weekend, killing a woman and wounding others before being shot to death by police.

Woman dead after brutal sexual assault

CRIME A 28-year-old man is to appear in Brampton court this morning, charged with first-degree murder in the vicious sexual assault and beating death of a 36-year-old woman.

Early Sunday morning, paramedics rushed to a first-floor apartment at 186 Church St. E., where they found a severely injured Loretta Lavalley.

The woman, who lived alone, died later at Sunnybrook hospital.

Peel police have released very few details about the region's 26th homicide of the year, including the identity of the accused man, who was found in the apartment when police arrived on the scene just after midnight Saturday.

It is believed he broke into the first-floor apartment and then physically restrained the woman while sexually assaulting her.

When emergency personnel arrived they found her unconscious and barely alive, suffering from severe head trauma, according to police sources.

Also inside was a naked man, who was suffering from an unknown medical condition.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Suspect

- A police source said the accused is a Brampton man who is well-known to police but there was no indication he and the deceased woman knew each other.

News in brief

FUNDING When it comes to social services funding, there is a $641.9 million gap, or, about $193 less in provincial funding per resident in services for the GTA/905 area compared to the rest of Ontario, which gets $381 per capita, says a report by Pricewaterhouse-Coopers. The report was prepared on behalf of the Strong Communities Coalition, which represents 20 hospitals and the United Ways from various GTA regions.

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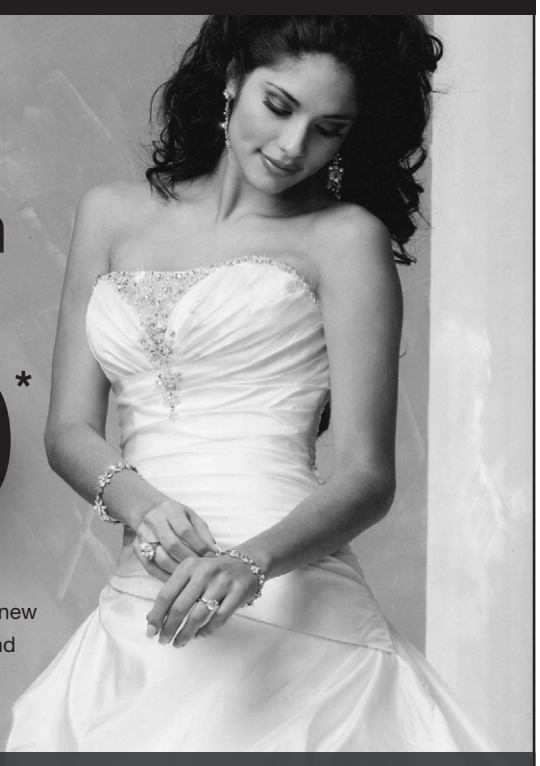

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History could be on the horizon

Should Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government be defeated — and should Gov. Gen Michaëlle Jean accept a coalition agreement — Canada would see its first change of government without an election since 1926. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Canada

Dotting the 'i's

This is a copy of the document signed yesterday by Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe, New Democratic Party Leader Jack Layton and Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion, securing a coalition deal among their three parties to later form a government if the ruling Conservatives are ousted from power.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

About face for Liberals

Party now supports Dion

The tantalizing prospect of regaining power proved stronger for Liberals than their reservations about handing the country's reins to Stéphane Dion.

The normally fractious Liberal caucus gave unanimous support yesterday to a proposal to defeat Stephen Harper's minority Tory regime and replace it with a Grit-NDP coalition, propped up by the Bloc Québécois.

The deal would install Dion as prime minister for five months, until his successor is chosen in a May 2 Liberal leadership vote.

According to insiders who attended a closed-door caucus briefing on the deal, MPs and senators were pumped about forming a new government but less enthusiastic about having Dion run it, even temporarily.

Indeed, when Dion at one point argued that he's the most experienced choice to fill the prime minister's shoes, there were quiet groans from some Liberals who blame his inept leadership for the party's drubbing in the Oct. 14 election.

> **"After those people give the signal, who the hell is going to say no?"** Liberal MP

While most MPs and senators gave Dion a standing ovation for his role in negotiating the coalition deal, a number pointedly remained glued to their chairs.

But whatever doubts remained, caucus members kept them to themselves after the three contenders vying to succeed Dion — Michael Ignatieff, Bob Rae and Dominic LeBlanc — rose one after the other to offer their full support for the plan.

"After those people give the signal, who the hell is going to say no?" said one disgusted MP of the love-in that ensued.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TOM HANSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper leaves the House of Commons in Ottawa yesterday after making a statement regarding the Oppositions' plan to form a coalition government.

NDP seek tape investigation

RECORDING The New Democrats have asked the RCMP to investigate a possible breach of the Criminal Code with respect to a caucus teleconference intercepted by a Conservative MP and released to media.

"I request that the RCMP initiate an investigation into a possible violation of the Criminal Code of Canada as a result of the interception and recording of the communication," Anne McGrath, chief of staff for NDP Leader Jack Layton, stated in the letter sent out yesterday.

Officials in the Prime Minister's Office handed out copies of the recording on Sunday to reporters, claiming the tape showed Layton and Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe had conspired some time ago to topple the Conservative government.

Respected Toronto criminal lawyer Clayton Ruby said what MP John Duncan did was legally wrong since he was not an "intended recipient" as prescribed by law. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Conversation recorded

- The NDP said in a letter to the Mounties that British Columbia Conservative MP John Duncan recorded the conversation when he "was neither the originator nor the intended recipient of the communication," even though an e-mail was mistakenly sent to him inviting him to take part.

Small, rural hospitals in danger of being shut

HEALTH Ontario hospitals are entering an era of drastic cost-cutting not seen since the slash-and-burn days of former Conservative premier Mike Harris, and the province is doing little to stop it, critics warned yesterday.

"This year is bad," said Natalie Mehra, director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

"This is the biggest round of health restructuring and cuts that we've seen since the Harris-era cuts. There's no question of that. Next year will be worse at the currently forecasted budget levels."

The group will release a report today detailing the cuts made at 75 hospitals to avoid illegal deficits, she said.

Some hospital boards are considering proposals that would effectively close small and rural hospitals, a move not seen since the Harris years, Mehra said.

Officials in Quinte have said they're looking at closing a hospital in order to balance their budget, while communities like Port Colborne and Fort Erie are considering proposals to turn their hospitals into clinics, she said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Retiring Blue Jays executive Paul Godfrey to be next president, CEO of National Post

Paul Godfrey, 69, a former politician and newspaper publisher who headed the Toronto Blue Jays for eight years, will become president and CEO of the National Post newspaper on Jan. 1. Godfrey's resignation from the Jays is effective Dec. 31. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Poverty makes many sick: Report

ILLNESS Poverty is making Canadians sick, robbing thousands of their health and creating huge costs to the health care system, says a report released today.

The study found that boosting incomes of the poor by $1,000 resulted in 10,000 fewer chronic health care problems, such as diabetes and bronchitis, says the report by the University of Toronto's Social Assistance in the New Economy (SANE) program.

When compared with wealthy Canadians, the study found the poorest 20 per cent have more than double the rate of diabetes and heart disease; a 60-percent greater chance of suffering from two or more chronic health problems; more than three times the rate of bronchitis and nearly double the rate of arthritis or rheumatism.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Parti Québécois leader Pauline Marois speaks at a campaign stop in St. Eustache, Que. yesterday.

Marois eyes Ottawa crisis

COALITION Parti Québécois Leader Pauline Marois is applauding the possibility Quebec could emerge as a winner and "get things" from Ottawa under a coalition federal government.

Marois suggested yesterday the participation of her party's federal cousin, the Bloc Québécois, in governing Canada might result in gains for Quebec.

She offered little indication of what benefits she envisioned, but she has lambasted Liberal Premier Jean Charest in recent days for allegedly remaining silent while Ottawa revised its equalization formula in a way that would slash transfer payments to Quebec by $1 billion. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Auto aid talks on despite turmoil

Province confident it can obtain package

An aid package to help Ontario's struggling automakers is still being discussed with Ottawa despite worries about turmoil in the capital.

"I'm confident that I'll continue to work with the federal government on this," Economic Development Minister Michael Bryant said yesterday.

"Given the circumstances around the auto industry, it's particularly important for myself and our government to remain non-partisan when it comes to dealing with the federal government. I'll let Parliament resolve its issues itself."

Bryant's comments came ahead of a Friday deadline from Bryant and federal Industry Minister Tony Clement for struggling automakers seeking financial support to crack open their books.

> **"It's particularly important for myself and our government to remain non-partisan."**
> Michael Bryant

Ontario Opposition Leader Bob Runciman expressed concern about the impact the federal fighting will have on automakers who are looking for short-term assistance.

"The Big Three (are) looking for assistance very quickly, in the short-term, so I think we have to be able to pull something together that's going to help them preserve jobs," Runciman said.

Bryant and Clement were sticking by their deadline and want to get a peek at the books of Chrysler, General Motors and Ford as soon as possible.

And while he's been talking with his federal Liberal counterparts on a regular basis, Bryant said he hasn't discussed the aid package with anyone in the party.

Canadian Auto Workers union president Ken Lewenza said after an hour-long meeting with Premier Dalton McGuinty yesterday that the province needs federal support on the issue. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Sealers should be taken off boat

TOWING The coast guard should make it standard practice to leave the "absolute minimum" of crew aboard small vessels when they tow them through ice, says a report into the deaths of four Quebec sealers on L'Acadien II. The captain of the coast guard ship believed it was too dangerous to transfer them over pack ice. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tory's days may be numbered

BYELECTION Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory's self-imposed deadline for finding a vacant seat to contest a byelection is Dec. 31, but it's uncertain his leadership can survive that long.

Senior Conservatives have warned Tory and his advisers that their patience is wearing thin because the political limbo is hurting the party's fundraising and undermining morale.

"The party is verging on irrelevance. Enough's enough," said one Conservative veteran.

Survive

- Tory survived a February leadership review, winning the support of two-thirds of his party.

For more than nine months, Tory has been trying to convince one of his 25 caucus members to resign to trigger a byelection and get him into the legislature. He has been without a seat since losing Don Valley West to Education Minister Kathleen Wynne in the Oct. 10, 2007, provincial election.

A small team of loyalists has been imploring Conservative MPPs to step aside, but all have refused.

PC MPPs gather at Bigliardi's Steakhouse on Church Street a week tonight — on the eve of their final caucus meeting of the year. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Bush apologizes for financial crisis

In a wide-ranging interview with ABC's World News that aired yesterday, U.S. President George W. Bush expressed remorse that the global financial crisis has cost jobs and harmed retirement accounts and said he'll back more government intervention if needed to ease the recession. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World

U.S. bio-terror attack likely: Report

A new report says the United States can expect a terrorist attack using nuclear or, more likely, biological weapons before 2013. The warning comes from a bipartisan commission in a study being briefed today to vice-president-elect Joe Biden. It suggests Barack Obama's administration should bolster efforts to counter and prepare for germ warfare by terrorists.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thai leader keeps out of capital in airport crisis

STANDOFF Thailand's prime minister stayed away from the capital yesterday, unable to quell a political crisis that has paralyzed his government for weeks and shut down the city's two main airports, stranding 300,000 foreigners.

Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat has refused to send in police to evict protesters besieging the airports or occupying his office for fear of bloodshed, instead making weak pleas for them to go home. The demonstrators insist they will stay until Somchai resigns; he has refused.

The months-long crisis has drained the economy and is worsening divisions in Thailand.

Late yesterday, an explosion hit protesters camped outside Bangkok's airport for domestic flights. It was the third such attack in two days targeting anti-Somchai activists.

So far, six people have been killed and dozens injured in bomb attacks, clashes with police, and street battles between government opponents and supporters.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

No support

- Neither the army, a key player in Thai politics, nor the country's revered king has offered the prime minister the firm backing he needs to resolve the standoff.

CHARLES DHARAPAK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton speak after a news conference in Chicago yesterday.

India demands Pakistan go after Mumbai attackers

SIEGE India demanded yesterday that Pakistan take "strong action" against those behind the deadly Mumbai attacks, and Washington pressured Islamabad to co-operate with the investigation.

The only known surviving attacker told police that his group trained for months in camps operated by a banned Pakistani militant group, learning tactics for their three-day siege.

In India, Pakistan's high commissioner to the country was told that "elements from Pakistan" had carried out the attacks, said Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman Vishnu Prakash. His phrasing, though, avoided blaming the Pakistani government.

Pakistan has repeatedly insisted it was not behind the attacks, with President Asif Ali Zardari saying yesterday the gunmen were "non-state actors."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Clinton made secretary of state

U.S. president-elect Barack Obama named former campaign rival Hillary Clinton as his secretary of state yesterday, and announced Robert Gates would remain as defence secretary, making President George W. Bush's Pentagon chief his own in the drive to wind down the U.S. role in Iraq.

At a news conference, Obama said of his former presidential rival: "She possesses an extraordinary intelligence and toughness and a remarkable work ethic ... She is an American of tremendous stature who will have my complete confidence."

"(Hillary Clinton) is an American of tremendous stature who will have my complete confidence."
President-elect Barack Obama

Clinton will give up her seat as a senator from New York to join the cabinet.

Her appointment was preceded by lengthy negotiations involving her husband, the former president, whose international business connections posed potential conflicts of interests.

The former president agreed to disclose the donors to the foundation that built his library, as well as contributors to his international foundation.

Obama also introduced retired marine general James Jones as White House national security adviser, former Justice Department official Eric Holder as attorney general and Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano as secretary of homeland security.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Family + Relationships

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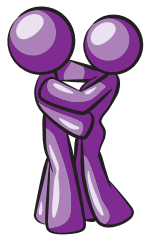
How to turn him on

Men can be mysterious creatures, especially when it comes to what turns them on. Wouldn't it be great to know exactly what gets him hot? Read what real men say gets them in the mood.

Getting all hot and bothered starts with just getting together. Let your man know when the time is right and he'll be more than happy to skip out on a boys night out in exchange for what you have in mind.

Ask your guy to tell you where he likes to be touched. There are more than just the obvious hotspots. Even better, try to figure it out together.

Being confident in bed is sexy. Don't force something you're not comfortable with. Stick with what feels right and it'll enhance the mood for the both of you.



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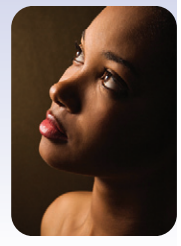

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- Cedarbrae Mall - kiosk
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- Kennedy Commons
- Malvern Town Centre
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- New Sudbury Centre
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- College Park
- Commerce Court
- Cumberland Terrace
- Dufferin Mall
- East York Town Centre
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Police in New York say angry passenger stabbed bus driver to death

Police are looking for a man who they say stabbed a New York City bus driver to death yesterday after not receiving a free transfer. After the man swiped an invalid fare card and asked for a transfer slip, police say the driver refused his request. The man then stabbed the driver and fled on foot. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chile **World AIDS Day**

SANTIAGO LLANQUIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Residents walk under a large red ribbon, the symbol of AIDS awareness, during a rally yesterday marking World AIDS Day in Santiago, Chile.

Mayor charged with bribery, fraud

The mayor of Alabama's largest city, Larry Langford, was arrested yesterday on federal bribery and fraud charges connected to a multibillion-dollar sewer bond deal that has driven the surrounding county to the brink of bankruptcy.

Federal prosecutors in Birmingham said Langford, Montgomery investment banker Bill Blount and lobbyist Al LaPierre were charged in the 101-count indictment released yesterday. The charges also include money laundering and filing false tax returns.

Langford is accused of receiving $230,000 US in bribes from Blount, some of them routed through LaPierre, to influence the bond deals while Langford was president of the Jefferson County Commission. Blount's firm made $7.1 million in fees from the bond work.

The indictment says Blount paid $219,500 to LaPierre for his help.

Langford and LaPierre pleaded not guilty in a court appearance and were released on $50,000 bond each. Blount arrived later at the courthouse to surrender.

The three men also have denied any wrongdoing in the face of similar allegations contained in a civil lawsuit by federal regulators.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

On the verge of bankruptcy

- Jefferson County is trying to avoid filing what would be the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history over $3.2 billion in debt for sewer bonds, nearly double the record of $1.7 billion set in 1994 by Orange County, Calif.

Relative arrested in Hudson family killings

SUSPECT Police arrested the estranged brother-in-law of Jennifer Hudson yesterday in the deaths of the entertainer's mother, brother and young nephew, taking him from a prison where he had been held on a suspected parole violation.

William Balfour was arrested at Stateville Correctional Center and released to detectives as he awaited formal charges in the shooting deaths of the singer and Oscar-winning actress's relatives, said Chicago police spokeswoman Monique Bond.

Until yesterday, police had identified Balfour, 27, only as a "person of interest" in the investigation. He had not been charged by late yesterday afternoon, said Andy Conklin, a spokesman for the Cook County state's attorney's office.

The bodies of Jennifer Hudson's mother, Darnell Hudson Donerson, and brother, Jason Hudson, were discovered Oct. 24 at the family's home on the South Side of Chicago. The body of seven-year-old Julian King was found three days later in a sport utility vehicle on the West Side. All three had been shot.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Criminal history

- Balfour — Julian King's stepfather and the estranged husband of Jennifer Hudson's older sister, Julia Hudson — served seven years for a 1999 attempted murder and vehicular hijacking conviction.

News in brief

SECURITY A family lawyer says a temporary worker trampled to death by customers at a New York-area Wal-Mart store on the day after Thanksgiving had no training in crowd control. Nassau County Police said a preliminary investigation shows Wal-Mart failed to provide adequate security.

ONLINE Al Qaeda's No. 2 leader praised the three Bali bombers recently executed in Indonesia and criticized Arab leaders for participating in a UN interfaith conference in a recording posted on the Internet yesterday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Comment & Views

Comment

PM down for the count

Harper's own party has begun to turn on him

NationalReport

Lawrence Martin

A week ago Stephen Harper was sitting pretty. He could comfortably look ahead to another long-lasting minority government.

There was no appetite in the opposition ranks to bring his government down.

But Stephen Harper, or Stephen Hubris as he is sometimes called, can't help himself. His brutally partisan and spiteful political instincts have too firm a grip on his soul. At a time of global economic crisis, at a time when cheap political partisanship should have been forgotten, he attempted a naked political power grab that has sealed his doom.

These types of leaders are usually described as political animals. But that's nowhere near strong enough for this PM. With this guy, there is no sense that politics is the pursuit of enlightened public policy. Rather, it is total Macbethian bloodsport. It's about sucking the political blood out of every opponent in sight. He thrives off it, lives off it. He's Count Stephen, political vampire.

And we can probably say now that the Count has given himself an expiration date.

For a while he can run and consult his party's dirty tricks handbook (200 pages) and hide.

At a time when cheap political partisanship should have been forgotten, he attempted a naked political power grab.

He can avoid a confidence vote and the possibility of a weird and wobbly coalition government by proroguing parliament. That would risk derision for Mr. Harper, as in 'Look at the coward run.'

And if he goes that route, it means he would have to come back with another throne speech early in the year. The opposition could vote him out then or, following that, on his budget. Meanwhile, having made such a colossal miscalculation on his economic statement, the daggers in his own party will soon be out for him. There was already uneasiness with him for his failing to win a minority when conditions seemed so right in the last campaign.

His one hope is that the Governor General buys the line that a coalition dependent on a separatist party for survival is not a viable option and calls another election. Who knows what would happen then, if there was another campaign. The disgust among Canadians would be incalculable. Anyone could win, including Count Stephen.

Lawrence Martin is a Globe and Mail correspondent and author who writes about national affairs from Ottawa.

MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

Protecting arts funding should be a priority

Melanie Doane

"Every budding dictatorship begins by muzzling the artists, because they're a mouthy lot and they don't line up and salute very easily." Margaret Atwood

I attended a rally over a month ago. The goal was to unite the artists of this country and remind them to vote for culture and that together, we have a strong voice, and we need to use it.

The election is over now, but I would like to see us hold on to the momentum and the good vibes and learn a lesson from our Quebecois contemporaries.

Our prime minister has said that ordinary people are not interested in art.

He lets us know this in spite of his opinion, for he is a music lover and can actually play the piano himself.

That's incredible!

Kind of reminds me of the scene in Pretty Woman where suddenly we see Richard Gere, alone in the hotel ballroom, working out his angst on the keyboard. He's so sensitive, so artsy.

It's an insult.

But the reason behind this attitude towards art and artists is more frightening than insulting. We know from statistics that any money spent on the arts is a sound investment. The cultural sector generated $46 billion, or 3.8 per cent of Canada's GDP, in 2007. So, if there is no financial risk, why the disdain?

Margaret Atwood recently suggested: "Every budding dictatorship begins by muzzling the artists, because they're a mouthy lot and they don't line up and salute very easily. Maybe that's why Mr. Harper began by shutting down funding for our artists abroad."

Or, perhaps Mark McKinny is on to something when he says, "What dancer broke your heart in first year university, Steven? It's time to get over it."

I don't know the answer, but I do know when there is an attempt to stop artists from doing their work.

There's a play I wish Mr. Harper had seen. It's about growing up loving the piano, playing and practicing for years only to discover you are not good enough to be a professional musician. 2 Pianos, 4 Hands played to sold out audiences across Canada and America, had a long off-Broadway run and also plays in London's West End. It continues to be performed around the world today.

It started with a tiny grant at a tiny theatre, and it's safe to say the investment paid off.

It was a hit because it spoke to people.

Our friends in "la belle province" understand this.

They like their artists. They support them and the monetary returns are substantial.

We need look no further for a great model to continue to improve the relationship between art, business and government.

Melanie Doane is a Juno award winning singer/songwriter whose new album, A Thousand Night, features duets with Ron Sexsmith, Jim Cuddy and Emilie-Claire Barlow. Melanie will perform across the country in December on CPR's Holiday Train.

Letters

TTC should improve bus routes in the right areas

I am writing in response to the new TTC bus improvements in the GTA. I find this to be an excellent decision, but there are in fact some negative elements to it.

My main concern is that the buses are not being added to the appropriate routes. There are two bus routes that I consistently take, one being the 24 Victoria Park, and the 70A O'Connor to Eglinton. A few months back, I was at Victoria Park Station and there was a notice stating that they would be adding more buses to the route. There is a bus that already comes every five minutes.

On the other hand, the 70A O'Connor bus comes between 20 and 30 minutes, depending on the time of day. This bus passes by East York Collegiate, home to lots of students.

Overall, my point is that if buses are to be added, they should be put on routes that need it the most, preferably routes with schools or busy neighbourhoods. Even extending the bus routes with extra fare would be beneficial for the community

SHANNON FOSTER
TORONTO

No coalition for me, please

I do not want a coalition government. The last election saw Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion finish second. Jack Layton would never be elected to prime minister, so I guess he wants to go in by the back door. Mr. Dion said in election speeches that the NDP economic platform would ruin the country and now the two want to spend our way out of a recession. Bob Rae tried that in Ontario when he was premier. I do not want them or the Bloc to run this country.

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Luxury sports car maker Aston Martin laying off employees
Aston Martin, maker of James Bond's $301,000 luxury DBS sports car and whose cheapest Vantage model costs $154,000, said yesterday it is laying off one-third of its workforce at its plant in England because of falling sales during the economic slump. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Air Canada lands Aeroplan lifeline

CRUNCH Air Canada has turned to its former frequent flier program for a lifeline as it faces a looming cash crunch.

The airline said yesterday that it has struck a deal with Aeroplan that will see the loyalty program "accelerate" $70 million in payments to Air Canada for reward tickets that Aeroplan members have booked. Aeroplan was spun off as a separate company by Air Canada parent ACE Aviation Holdings Inc. three years ago.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

In brief

BCE DEAL Executives at BCE Inc. are continuing discussions with accounting firm KPMG — which refused to sign off on its debt-heavy $52-billion privatization — and the buyout consortium led by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan "to seek to satisfy all closing conditions" of the takeover. But observers aren't holding out much hope the deal can be resurrected. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

TSX's fall worst since 1987

A broad selloff on the Toronto stock market led by the energy and financial sectors yesterday sent the index to its worst one-day percentage loss since the crash of October 1987.

The S&P/TSX composite index plunged 864.41 points or 9.3 per cent to 8,406.21 after gaining just over 1,100 points last week. The 1987 fall erased 11.3 per cent from the Toronto market.

Analysts noted investors have plenty of worries, including the prospect that the Conservative government could be ousted, word the U.S. economy is contracting and a shaky start to the holiday shopping season.

NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A woman walks by the TSX sign in Toronto yesterday. The Toronto index later plunged 864.41 points to close at 8,406.21.

Statistics Canada, meanwhile, said the Canadian economy expanded 0.1 per cent in September, which most economists believe was Canada's last month of growth before what could be a prolonged decline. The third quarter of the year showed 0.3 per cent growth in GDP.

The energy sector was a major TSX loser, down 13 per cent as crude oil fell $5.15 to $49.28 US a barrel in New York after OPEC did not cut production at a weekend meeting in Cairo. OPEC meets again Dec. 17.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Recession in U.S. began Dec. 2007

ECONOMY Stocks plunged yesterday amid a torrent of chilling economic data, including a report by the U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research that said the U.S. economy officially slipped into a recession in December 2007.

New York's Dow Jones Industrial Average wiped away the bulk of last week's 10 per cent increase. The blue-chip index lost 7.7 per cent, or 679.95 points, to 8,149.09.

While other economists declare a recession after two consecutive quarterly declines in gross domestic product, NBER rejects that "two-quarter rule" as it also relies on much broader measures. "A recession begins when the economy reaches a peak of activity and ends when the economy reaches its trough."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Retailers burn midnight oil for holiday shoppers

More stores are staying open all night this holiday shopping season though it may not do much to boost their bottom line.

They say they're doing it to keep time-pressed customers happy more than to pump their profits or juice their sales. Indeed, there may not be much more than goodwill in the endeavour, according to industry analyst Brian Yarbrough at Edward Jones.

"Not a lot of people shop those stores between 11 at night and 7 in the morning," Yarbrough said. On the other hand, it's not costing the retailer much to offer the extra service, he said.

"You already have people in the stores stacking shelves, you really only need to add a person or two at the checkout, so it doesn't cost a lot."

Wal-Mart Canada, which started the trend three years ago, opened most of its stores to 24-hour holiday service yesterday.

Loblaw Cos. also said it will expand its 24 hour service this year. Wal-Mart rival Zellers said 50 of its stores would be open 24 hours while 44 would be open until midnight.

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Your Money

EDITOR: NINA DRAGICEVIC, NINA.DRAGICEVIC@METRONEWS.CA

Barter, trade or get it free

SmartCookies

smartcookies.com

Smart Cookies are all about living the sweet life without the sacrifice. And in recent months, we have needed to become even more creative in getting what we want for less.

So sit up and take note — we've got some savvy suggestions on how to save money on the things you want and, in some cases, even get them for free!

Barter

We all have a special skill or services that we can offer others. Why not barter for other services or products? A family we worked with on our W Network show, Smart Cookies, actually bartered their daughter's entire wedding. And one of our Smart Cookies has bartered her marketing services for free personal training sessions. Just be sure that when you do barter, it is a fair trade. If you make $100 per hour and the person you are bartering with does work that is valued at $25 per hour, be sure that you do not do a one-hour swap — if you do you will be devaluing your work and yourself!

Trade

Check to see if you can get what you are looking for through trading or swapping. There are a number of websites where you can exchange things you already own, and no longer want, for things you do want. The basic premise in which these sites are based is that you provide things you want to get rid of to other people, in exchange for points. With your points you purchase items that you might want from other individuals. Items up for swapping include books, DVDs, games and baby items. One of our favourites for books is bookmooch.com. Also, check out Craigslist.com, which offers swapping services and posts information about swap meets in your area.

Since coming together as a money group, we have saved thousands of dollars on clothes and other items. Not only do we share our stuff but we swap as well. Once a season, we get together with our friends and swap everything from clothes, magazines, to beauty products that we no longer need. Not only do you save money, but it is also a great way to get together with girlfriends without spending a ton of cash.

On the House

Who said you can't get anything for free? There are heaps of things that people no longer want but are willing to give away in the interest of recycling and reusing.

Check out Craigslist.com and freecycle.ca for things you might be looking for. We found a brand new medium sized pet carrier (perfect for our pampered pooch Lucy), a beautiful wine rack and even a new couch!

Also, if you are a new parent, tons of companies compete for your business by offering free samples, promotional packages and goodies. Check out freeparentstuff.ca.

For more ways to save check out smartcookies.com or pick up a copy of our book Smart Cookies Guide to Making More Dough.

If you have questions or suggestions for the Smart Cookies e-mail us at smartcookies@metronews.ca.

Tune in Wednesday night at 9 p.m. EST/PST on the W Network and be sure to visit smartcookies.com for more tips.

Investing

Allan Small

The week's column gives a market commentary for the past two weeks. Visit metronews.ca

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Do the gains/losses dance

Q Two months ago, I sold a condo for a substantial gain. With decline in stock prices, this is a good opportunity to sell some losers to reduce my condo gains. These are solid stocks, so I will have my wife repurchase them the next day. I'm in the market for the long term. What percentage of my gains are taxed and losses deductible? Manny

A Generally, the profits from the sale of real estate are taxed as capital gains. Fifty per cent of the gains are taxed at your marginal tax rate. Capital gains can be reduced with capital losses from other investments such as stocks. Investors can use the sale of shares as a year-end tax planning strategy to either reduce gains or utilize carry-forward losses. Don't wait until Dec. 31, trades are generally settled in five business days.

However, please consult your financial adviser. The sale of shares that result in a loss when the individual or spouse (or affiliated person) purchases the same shares within 30 days prior to or subsequent to the sale would be considered a "Superficial loss." Get more details first.

Henry Choo Chong, CGA, provides professional accounting and taxation solutions: choochonghcga@yahoo.ca.

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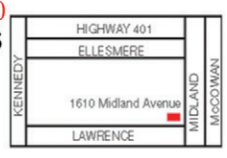

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Look inside Metro's Gift Guide section on December 4 for your chance to WIN!

No purchase necessary. One entry per person. Contest open to Canadian residents of legal age, excluding residents of Quebec. Contest closes December 5, 2008. Approximate retail value of prize is $2,500. Odds of winning depend on number of entries received. Rogers Cable may not be available in all areas. Selected entrants not residing in a Rogers Cable ready area are eligible to win, in lieu of the Rogers Cable portion of the prize, one (1) LG 42" Flat-Panel LCD HDTV and one (1) $1500 gift card for Best Buy. This prize will only be made available to winners not residing in a Rogers Cable ready area. For full contest rules and details, visit www.metronews.ca.

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Former NHLer Martin dies

Quebec provincial police say Hubert (Pit) Martin, a four-time NHL all-star in the 1960s and '70s, has died after his snowmobile plunged into an icy lake. Police say Martin, 64, was driving the vehicle on Lake Kanasuta in northwestern Quebec on Sunday when the ice cracked and he plunged into the freezing water. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports

Penn State mascot arrested

The Penn State University student who plays the Nittany Lion mascot was arrested on a DUI charge and his status for the Rose Bowl is in doubt, police and school officials said. James Sheep was pulled over by police on Nov. 22, hours before Penn State's 49-18 win over Michigan State, University Police Capt. Bill Moerschbacher said yesterday. METRO NEWS SERVICES

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA

Burress posts $100K in bail

NFL Taken to court in handcuffs, Plaxico Burress posted $100,000 US bail on weapons possession charges yesterday as a frenzy grew around the case of the Giants star receiver who accidentally shot himself in a nightclub.

Burress

Authorities said teammate Antonio Pierce was being investigated over his role in the shooting, while the Super Bowl-champion Giants weren't sure what action they would take against Burress.

Burress shot himself in the right thigh in the VIP section of the Latin Quarter nightclub in Manhattan about 1 a.m. Saturday, police said. He did not have a permit to carry a handgun in New York. A witness reported hearing a popping sound before Burress' legs began to shake, according to a criminal complaint. It said the person saw a bloody pistol fall out of his pant leg and land on the floor before Burress said, "Take me to a hospital."

It's believed Pierce took Burress to the car and then left with him, according to police. Burress was charged with two counts of second-degree criminal possession of a weapon, which could result in a prison sentence of at least 3½ years. He was not required to enter a plea yesterday and is due back in court on March 31. Burress did not say anything in court.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crunch may hit NHL the hardest

Lack of U.S. TV deal, falling loonie put league behind other sports during growing recession

The NHL will likely find itself on financial thin ice if the recession deepens, according to many leading economists and financiers in the sports community.

With no substantial American television contract, teams in questionable, non-traditional markets and a falling Canadian dollar, the National Hockey League will suffer more than North America's other major sports leagues in a prolonged economic downturn, according to those experts.

The upside for Canadian fans is that those economic woes could mean another team north of the border as owners look to the game's hotbeds as an economic salve.

"Hockey is the most vulnerable and that's primarily because of the lack of a TV contract in the United States," said Richard Powers, associate dean of Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto.

"I really do think we're going to see some contraction and/or relocation. And it's very likely we're going to see another franchise in Canada. Where it will end up, Winnipeg or southern Ontario, is anyone's guess. But the market here is ripe."

U.S. markets such as Washington, above, also have attendance problems.

The experts generally agreed the NFL would emerge from the economic downturn largely unscathed because of its mass appeal, enormous stadiums, short schedule and affordable ticket prices.

The NFL's TV deal is worth $2.2 billion (all figures U.S.). While the NBA and Major League Baseball also have hefty broadcast price tags, the NHL gives its games away to NBC south of the border under a profit-sharing arrangement.

The NHL board of governors meets later this month with the state of the economy on the agenda.

"We, the Leafs, are looking forward to that discussion so we can hear how healthy the league is," said Richard Peddie, president of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment. "It's tough out there. Our business is soft around the edges. That T-shirt isn't being bought. I'll pass on the fries with that hamburger.

"It may sound trivial, but it all adds up."

"Hockey is the most vulnerable and that's primarily because of the lack of a (U.S.) TV contract."
Richard Powers

Larry Grimes, president of W.B. Grimes and Co., which specializes in sports team acquisition, says the recent uptick in interest in hockey — its success with outdoor games, the marketing of Sidney Crosby and strong Stanley Cup ratings — might act as a buffer for the league.

But he said the decline of the Canadian dollar after the six Canadian teams generated $150 million in profit last year is an issue.

"The falling Canadian dollar versus the U.S. dollar certainly can't be good news if you're a Canadian owner," Grimes said. "It's heading south again. That would make it difficult to pay the big salary and compete in the free-agency market."

In 2007, a rising loonie spurred growth in the NHL's strongest markets. But with it back down in the 80-cent range, the Canadian dollar could have catastrophic impact on revenue and the salary cap:

- Players might not get their full salaries if league revenues don't meet expectations, with owners clawing back money through an escrow account as provided for in the collective bargaining agreement.
- If the cap, pegged at 56.7 per cent of revenues, declines, some teams might have to dump players, while free agents expecting a bonanza would have to settle for less.
- A prolonged recession could also have a profound effect on hockey's grassroots, especially in the U.S.

"I am concerned about hockey," said Robert Modansky, who heads up business valuations and bankruptcies for Rosen Seymour Shapss Martin and Co. in New York.

Modansky comes from a hockey-mad family that attends Rangers games and has one son in hockey. "I make a moderate six-figure income. But what about the guy who doesn't? Hockey is an expensive sport to play, to have your kids play, or to watch."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

For a complete recap of last night's Leafs/Kings game, visit us online at metronews.ca/sports.

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Crosby first star of week
Sidney Crosby's recent surge earned him the NHL's first star of the week yesterday. The Penguins captain scored six goals in three games. He also added three assists to move into second place on the league's scoring chart behind teammate Evgeni Malkin. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Trade, firing looming in Edmonton

YorkReport

Marty York

marty.york@metronews.ca

Brace yourself for a major shakeup involving the Edmonton Oilers.

NHL sources told Metro yesterday the Oilers are poised to complete a significant trade and/or fire coach Craig MacTavish, likely this week.

"They (the Oilers) have come nowhere close to what they expected to be this season and (club chief) Kevin Lowe is extremely annoyed," an NHL source said. "Kevin's just about ready to pull the trigger."

The Oilers were supposed to be a contender this season.

Oddsmakers reckoned they'd likely qualify for the playoffs. Yet they've turned out to be inconsistent, at best, and are below .500.

Pre-season prognostications predicting prolific production from the Oilers' forwards are proving false and it's actually defencemen leading the team in scoring.

Edmonton players are bracing themselves for changes, but defenceman Sheldon Souray hopes MacTavish isn't affected.

"It's not Mac's fault," Souray said. "It's up to the guys here to bring a little more and be a little more accountable for our production."

MacTavish is in his eighth season as the Oilers' coach. Only two of his counterparts — the Buffalo Sabres' Lindy Ruff (11 seasons) and the Nashville Predators' Barry Trotz (10) — have coached their NHL teams longer than MacTavish.

• From the hard-to-believe department comes information of a mind-boggling bidding war for pitcher A.J. Burnett, who is 31, injury-prone and has started 30 games in a season only twice.

The Blue Jays would like to re-sign the right-hander, but they won't come close to matching offers made by the New York Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Baltimore Orioles, Atlanta Braves and Philadelphia Phillies.

When all's said and done, Burnett will collect a guaranteed $85- to $90-million U.S. for five seasons. Unbelievable, eh?

• Syndicated baseball columnist Tracy Ringolsby listed Jays general manager J.P. Ricciardi as one of his top turkeys for a U.S. Thanksgiving Day piece last week.

Why?

"For continuing to moan about the struggles of competing in a division that includes the free-spending Yankees and Red Sox while Tampa Bay, with the second-lowest payroll, was winning the American League East."

• The Milwaukee Brewers are dumping Quebec-born reliever Eric Gagne, who compiled a 5.44 earned-run average last season and lost the closer's role in May... The Red Sox are adding two quality Japanese pitchers — 22-year-old Junichi Tazawa and 33-year-old Kenjin Kawakami ... Boston's also hot to trot after star first baseman Mark Texeira ... And the Jays still covet slugger Milton Bradley, although they have yet to talk dollars with him — and he's leaning toward a deal with the Rays.

Talk Heat-ing up

• The Toronto Raptors, desperately attempting to strengthen their bench, are talking trade. NBA sources tell Metro's Marty York that Raps chief Bryan Colangelo spent part of the past weekend examining potential deals with Miami Heat counterpart Pat Riley, among others.

Boxing Oscar statue

AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES

Boxer Oscar De La Hoya lifts his arms in front of a newly unveiled seven-foot-tall bronze statue of himself at the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles yesterday. De La Hoya fights Manny Pacquiao this Saturday in Las Vegas.

Sports in brief

NBA Stephon Marbury was ordered to stay away from the New York Knicks yesterday while the team looks for a solution to the latest controversy surrounding its point guard. "After meeting with Stephon and his representative this afternoon, we have directed Stephon not to participate in practice or attend games until further notice," Knicks president Donnie Walsh said in a statement. Marbury wants out of New York and lashed out at teammates and coach Mike D'Antoni in yesterday's New York Post.

SOCCER Liverpool was booed off the field by frustrated fans after being held 0-0 by West Ham yesterday, squandering a chance to pull away from Chelsea atop the Premier League. The Reds now lead the standings by one point, but missed a host of chances as they failed to exploit Chelsea's surprise loss to Arsenal on Sunday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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London $149 — Travel Dec 29 - Jan 13/ts + taxes & fees $448
New York City $198 — Travel Jan 21 - Jan 28/pd + taxes & fees $117

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Puerto Plata 4-Star $288 — Viva Wyndham Tangerine Palace + taxes & fees $308
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Puerta Vallarta 4-Star $347 — Royal Decameron Complex + taxes & fees $267
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare, transfers and 7 nights 4-star all-inclusive accom. Departs Dec 5/nol/ts. ADD swimming with doplhins from $118.
Mayan Riviera 4-Star $348 — Sandos Caracol Beach and Spa + taxes & fees $267
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare, transfers and 7 nights 4-star all-inclusive accom. Departs Dec 6/sgn/5g. ADD horseback riding on the beach from $94.

Holidays
Las Vegas 4 Nights $269 — Circus Circus Hotel & Casino + taxes & fees $212
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare and 4 nights 3-star accom on the Las Vegas Strip. Departs Dec 7/inf/wg. UPGRADE to 4-star Monte Carlo from $20 per night. ADD Hoover Dam deluxe tour from $69.
Mont Tremblant Ski Holiday $499 — Les Suites Tremblant + taxes and fees $49
INCLUDES 4 nights 3-star accom and 3-day lift pass. Departs Jan 25/usv. ADD 4WD car rental from Montreal with unlimited milage from $40 per day.
San Francisco Getaway $649 — Holiday Inn Express Fisherman's Wharf + taxes & fees $122
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare, transfers and 4 nights 3-star accom in Fisherman's Wharf. Departs Jan 15/inf/ac.

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Ronaldo searchable

Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo was named Yahoo Canada's most searched athlete for 2008 yesterday. U.S. swimmer Michael Phelps was second while Sidney Crosby was third. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Sports in brief

BASEBALL Career steals leader Rickey Henderson heads 10 first-time candidates on this year's Baseball Hall of Fame ballot, joining holdovers Mark McGwire and Jim Rice – eligible for the final time. Other newcomers are Jay Bell, David Cone, Ron Gant, Mark Grace, Jesse Orosco, Dan Plesac, Greg Vaughn, Mo Vaughn and Matt Williams. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Bills' Edwards day-to-day

Questionable for Sunday's Toronto game

It's bad enough the Buffalo Bills have no margin for error if they want to keep their slim post-season hopes alive over the next four games. Now they may have to do it without starting quarterback Trent Edwards.

RICK STEWART/GETTY IMAGES

Bills quarterback Trent Edwards left after the first half of Sunday's loss to the 49ers with a groin injury.

Edwards was pulled after the first half of Buffalo's disheartening 10-3 loss to San Francisco on Sunday with a groin injury, and was still sore yesterday. His status for this weekend's game against Miami in Toronto won't be known until later this week after more tests are performed.

"He really felt it the last throw of the first half," coach Dick Jauron said yesterday, adding that Edwards is day-to-day.

"I don't know how much significantly more information we'll have unless the soreness goes away."

Edwards wasn't in the locker-room when the media had access.

If he can't go, backup J.P. Losman will take control of a team that has lost five of its last six games. Losman completed 11 of 17 passes in the second half for 93 yards.

Against the lowly 49ers, the Bills looked nothing like the poised and polished team that started the season 5-1.

Botched field goals, the inability to generate a touchdown in four trips inside the San Francisco 20-yard line, wasting four timeouts and questionable play-calling against a team that had won just once in its last seven games all have Bills players shaking their heads.

"We have to do something different and find a way to win. I can't tell you how we can do that right now," defensive end Chris Kelsay said.

Buffalo's defence allowed just 195 yards, and sacked 49ers quarterback Shaun Hill three times. But an offence that rolled up 350 yards couldn't score a touchdown.

"We have to get the ball into the end zone somehow and any way at all," Jauron said. "It's not an easy task, but we just have to find the guys that can score."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Brewers offer Sabathia arbitration
CC Sabathia, likely to command the largest contract among this year's free-agent pitchers, was offered salary arbitration yesterday by the Milwaukee Brewers. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Calderon showing his edge

Jose Calderon wrestled and struggled and wiggled and fought.

He was displeased with the physical treatment he was getting from Derek Fisher as he and the Laker point guard battled for a loose ball Sunday night and the Raptor point guard made it apparent to everyone on the court and in the building that he wasn't going to take very much.

A possession or two later, Calderon was called for a foul trying to corral Fisher and seconds later Fisher picked up a personal for a rather egregious attempt to stop Calderon's progress towards the basket.

Referee Joey Crawford had enough during the ensuing stoppage in play during the third quarter of the Lakers' 112-99 win over the Raptors and the veteran official hit the players with technical fouls.

It was a sequence that might have otherwise been lost in the flow of the game, but it didn't get past the eyes of coach Sam Mitchell, who was more than glad to talk about the feisty attitude in glowing terms.

> **"We've got to fight everybody, we have to fight for 48 minutes and forget about who we play and where we play."**
> Jose Calderon

"I like the way Jose responded, I like the way some of our guys responded," Mitchell said after the game. "Our guys didn't take a step back, we kept fighting.

"The game got a little chippy and I thought we showed a level of toughness. We kind of responded and started hitting back a little bit."

For the Raptors to start "hitting" either in retaliation or to get in a first shot, is not something the generally passive squad has been known for over the past few years.

They have a reputation of being a "nice" team that, when physically challenged will not return the aggression in kind.

Calderon has a bit of an edge to him — it's been seen in snippets since he arrived in Toronto but seldom to the point it did in Sunday's game. Teammates, coaches and fans had to be glad to see it.

"We've got to fight everybody, we have to fight for 48 minutes and forget about who we play and where we play," Calderon said after the Lakers game.

"I think we're going to be a pretty good team, we have to keep working, be patient. We just have to concentrate for 48 minutes."

The other Raptor most likely to initiate a confrontation and certainly not back down from one is injured centre Jermaine O'Neal, who has now missed three games with a sore left ankle.

An agitated O'Neal said there was nothing new to report after the Lakers game, his ankle — still swollen — is getting better and he tries each day to see if it's good enough to play on.

The mantra remains the same, he worked a bit at practice in Los Angeles yesterday, will get some treatment, try again this morning at shootaround here and then find out whether he'll go tonight against the Nuggets.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Self-diagnosis by search engine

Online health information is breeding a generation of cyberchondriacs — people who needlessly fear the worst diagnosis after surfing the net, says a Microsoft team that studied health-related web searches. **BBC NEWS ONLINE**

Health

Sanctuary spa products

The Sanctuary, a celebrated day spa in London's Covent Garden, has brought its treatment line to Canada. The spa products includes lotions, scrubs, bath soak, shower mousse and body butter, to name just a few, and will be available at Rexall's PharmaPlus, and at select Loblaws, Superstores, Zehrs and Fortinos. Prices range from $11.99 to $19.99. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Shoppers unveils new retail beauty boutiques

BEAUTY PRODUCTS Shoppers Drug Mart is unveiling a new retail boutique designed as a one-stop shop for customers seeking beauty advice, spa services and access to a wide variety of global brands.

Murale will feature luxury, dermatological and niche brands from around the world, including Bobbi Brown, Chanel, Estée Lauder, Lancome and Nars, as well as over 75 men's and women's fragrances. The retail beauty boutique will also feature a dermatological area, a skin-care team with full-time esthetician and pharmacist, a menu of more than 30 professional beauty and spa services and "Murale Beauty Masters" to assist shoppers.

The retailer launched its first Murale location in Place d'Orleans in Ottawa earlier this month, with a second slated to open at Galerie Place Ville Marie in Montreal Dec. 4. The company plans to open between five and seven additional locations in Canada next year. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Debunking myths about HIV/AIDS

CELIA MILNE
for Metro Canada

Haven't heard much about HIV/AIDS lately? The disease is definitely still with us. "I think there's a misconception that the HIV/AIDS problem has gone away in Canada. And that is not the case," says Dr. Ann Stewart, Medical Director at Casey House in Toronto.

Every two hours, someone in Canada is infected with HIV. In fact, Ontario has experienced a shocking 75 per cent increase in HIV incidence rates in the last 10 years. More and more of those contracting the virus are women and young people. And while medications have given many a chance to live their lives, doctors are starting to see premature aging in those who have been taking meds for a long time.

With the commemoration of World AIDS Day yesterday, Casey House and the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation would like to blast some common myths about HIV.

MYTH: I won't get HIV because I'm straight and I don't use IV drugs.

FACT: Most people who become infected with HIV thought it couldn't happen to them. Although gay men and drug users are most at risk for contracting HIV, nearly 30 per cent of new infections in Canada now happen in women.

MYTH: You can catch HIV from mosquito bites, or from touching, hugging or kissing someone who is HIV positive.
FACT: Only semen, vaginal fluid, blood or breast milk transmit HIV.

MYTH: I don't feel sick; therefore, I don't have HIV.
FACT: You can have HIV and be symptom-free for many years. In fact, you may be extremely infectious.

MYTH: You can't get HIV from someone who is getting treatment.
FACT: Although treatment can impact the risk of infection, HIV can still be transmitted through unprotected sex with someone who is receiving treatment.

MYTH: A diagnosis of HIV is a death sentence.
FACT: People with HIV are living longer than ever before, but they remain vulnerable to developing AIDS and other serious diseases such as opportunistic cancers, heart disease, osteoporosis and diabetes, and must adhere to careful treatment (and its negative side effects) for the rest of their lives.

MYTH: If I get HIV, I can be cured with treatment.
FACT: There is no cure for HIV/AIDS.

HIV rates

Here is a glance at HIV rates across Canada:

Ontario:
- Over 26,000 people living with HIV, and of that number, 16,550 live in Toronto.

B.C.:
- It's estimated there are 12,000 people infected with HIV.

Alberta:
- There are approximately 3,200 people living with HIV/AIDS, with a much higher rate of infection in Edmonton than in Calgary.

CELIA MILNE/ FOR METRO CANADA

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Contracting HIV from touching, hugging or kissing is a myth. It can only be transmitted through semen, vaginal fluid, blood or breast milk.

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Squashing high blood pressure
Getting more potassium may lower the risk of developing high blood pressure, and decrease blood pressure in people who already have it. Winter squash is a rich source: One cup of hubbard squash, for instance, provides about 16 per cent of what you need each day. **BEST HEALTH MAGAZINE**

Lovers in a difficult time

It seems nothing can escape the effects of the economic crisis, even our love lives. According to Paul A. Falzone, CEO of worldwide dating services Together Dating, *togetherdating.com,* and The Right One, *therightone.com*, the demand for professional matchmaking apparently remains the same.

The one difference? More customers are paying on credit, he says. And they're taking the term "cheap date" literally.

Singles are using less cash and going out on more creative, yet inexpensive, dates, says Falzone. From catching a show at a community theatre instead of buying tickets for a play at a major theatre to choosing quaint, less expensive restaurants, singles are finding many ways to save money yet still have a great time on a date.

"It really isn't about where you go, what you do or how much money you spend on a date. It's about who you're with," says Falzone.

JOHN DOWLAND

Pick up a feather duster at the Dollar Store, and you've got yourself a cost-effective prop for livening up sex.

Other cheap date ideas? Go to an art opening. You usually get free booze and the visuals give you and your date something to talk about.

Ice-skating is cheap but romantic and fun. And you have an excuse to keep each other warm.

Sex is fun and usually free. All you need is a willing partner. Of course, if you've been with the same partner for a while, you might want to spice things up.

"Who can afford to shell out $300 for designer sex toys? Luckily, a trip to the Dollar Store can net you some nifty sexual enhancers."

But who can afford to shell out $300 for the designer sex toys currently on the market? Luckily, a trip to the Dollar Store can net you some nifty sexual enhancers.

Like a feather duster, which is fun for tickling and teasing. Toss on an apron, some high heels and nothing else and you can play maid. Buy a toy sheriff's kit and arrest your sweetie for indecent exposure. Grab a blindfold and a couple silk scarves to use as ankle and/or wrist restraints for a night of cheap, mildly kinky fun.

Find a sexy shot of your sweetheart and glue it to a square piece of cardboard. Cut out a cardboard arrow and attach it with a pronged paper fastener so you can spin the arrow.

Buy sticky dots and tell your partner to place the dots on the image wherever they'd like you to get busy. Spin the arrow and toss dice to determine how many minutes you must spend on the spot where the arrow lands.

Or simply buy some bubble-blowing liquid, light a few scented candles, blow bubbles, feed each other cheap chocolate (two bars for a buck!) and assure one another that you will get through this... together.

Brain waves are window into autism

RESEARCH Unique brain wave patterns, spotted for the first time in autistic children, may help explain why they have so much trouble communicating. Using an imaging helmet, researchers discovered what they believe are "signatures of autism" that show a delay in processing individual sounds. The delay is only a fraction of a second, but when it's for every sound, the lag time can become a major obstacle in speaking and understanding people.

Sleep terrors are hereditary: study

RESEARCH Night terrors, in which children exhibit sudden bouts of extreme fear and screaming an hour or two after going to sleep, seem to have a strong hereditary component, a new study suggests. In a large study of twins, Canadian researchers found over 40 per cent of sleep terror cases can likely be attributed to genetics. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Babysitting grandparents keep their charges safe

SAFETY Count your blessings if your parents look after your kids. A new study has found that children cared for by their grandparents get fewer injuries than those in organized daycare, or even those being looked after by their mother or another relative. Researchers wanted to test the theory that grandparents don't use modern safety practices. But by studying 5,500 young children in different kinds of care, and keeping track of their injury rates over almost three years, they found grandparents are safe babysitters. The study was done by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Md. and published in the November issue of Pediatrics.

CELIA MILNE/FOR METRO CANADA

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Queens Quay Revitalization Environmental Assessment Public Meeting #2

Waterfront Toronto in partnership with the City of Toronto is currently undertaking an environmental assessment for the revitalization of Queens Quay Boulevard from Lower Spadina Avenue to Lower Jarvis Street. This study is exploring how to implement long standing City policy objectives including revitalizing Queens Quay into a scenic waterfront drive and completing the Martin Goodman Trail which today is absent through the central waterfront.

The project team, along with the City of Toronto and Toronto Transit Commission have been developing design alternatives for the cross-section of the street and collaboratively design alternatives have been developed.

Waterfront Toronto will be holding the second public meeting on Dec. 8 to present the design alternatives.

Date: Monday, December 8, 2008
Location: Harbourfront Community Centre
627 Queens Quay West (at Bathurst)
Time: 6:00 p.m. (Open House)
7:00 p.m. (Presentation & Discussion)

For more information or to be added to the project mailing list, please visit: **www.waterfrontoronto.ca**

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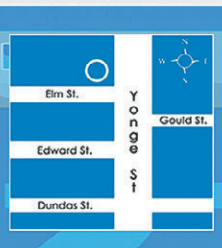

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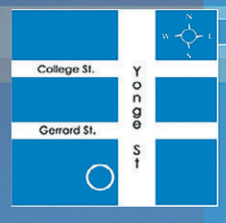

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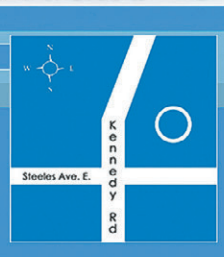

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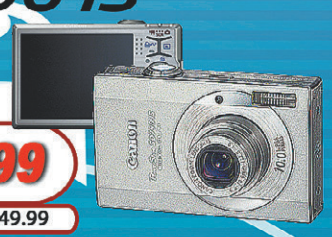

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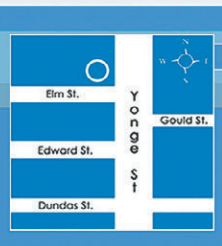

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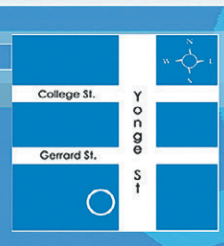

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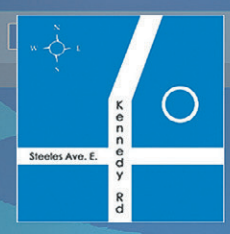

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Antioxidants and aging

Diets and creams claiming their antioxidant properties could cheat aging may be worthless, a study says. Using Nematode worms, scientists found even those given enhanced antioxidant powers to deal with tissue damaging "free radicals" did not live longer. **BBC NEWS ONLINE**

Helping you stay perfectly plucked

Brow bars cater to women on the go

Never mind that your stocks are taking a beating, your property taxes recently doubled and your boss is threatening big budget cuts. A girl's gotta look good.

"No matter what's going on, women want to look and feel beautiful," says Hilary Price, the sassy mastermind behind Benefit Cosmetics's fast-growing chain of Brow Bars.

In town recently to help open the company's newest location inside Holt Renfrew's Bloor Street store, Price demonstrated the Benefit approach to beautiful brows — a thorough waxing, a quick pluck, and finally a subtle polish with Brow Zing wax-and-powder kit.

This 20-minute ritual — known as the Benefit brow job — costs $23 and offers customers big bang for their beauty buck, explains the perfectly plucked Price.

"It takes 10 years off. It opens your eyes. It's like a mini facelift. Not everybody wants a facelift, but who doesn't want to look more awake?"

Benefit must be onto something. The San Francisco-based cosmetics company, founded by twin sisters Jane and Jean Ford 31 years ago, opened its first Brow Bar in 2003, identifying it as a niche area that would allow the brand to grow globally.

Five years later, with more than 50 bars waxing women worldwide, Benefit aims to open 40 more locations by the end of this year.

IMAGE SOURCE

On the heels of the nail-bar craze come brow bars, which offer busy women quick eyebrow shaping services and walk-in appointments.

By specializing in brow shaping and offering the option of walk-ins, Benefit Brow Bars attract busy, fashionable women who want to look high maintenance, but aren't. "Requiring an appointment in this day and age is ridiculous," says Price. "The more fashionable a city, the busier the women are," she says.

And she should know, having recently stopped in Seoul, Paris, London, Milan, Munich, New York and Toronto on important brow-related business.

Price has seen the state of the global brow. The skinny fringe is so over, says Price, noting that it's partly because most women don't have time to pluck every day. Multicultural cities have helped create a more accepting notion of beauty. And a few influential and multicultural fashion icons have helped, too.

"If you look closely at Ugly Betty, she's very well groomed," she says, referring to the TV series about a homely but hard-working Hispanic girl who makes good in the fashion media. Starring exotic beauty America Ferrera, Ugly Betty gives thick brows a good name.

"It takes 10 years off. It opens your eyes. It's like a mini facelift. Not everybody wants a facelift, but who doesn't want to look more awake?" Hillary Price

"And if you think about it, a full, thick, dark brow is more fun to play with," says Price, adding that the dark-browed vampires in this season's hit movie Twilight will also influence face-framing fashion.

But just because bushy is big doesn't mean hair should be given permission to grow willy-nilly. Many women take hair removal very seriously. (You know who you are.) That almost always means going beyond the brows.

"Nobody talks about the hairs that grow out out of the bottom of your face," says Price, admitting she has a doozy on her chin that seems to pop out fully grown.

"At Benefit, we talk about it," she says, laughing. "And we're takin' it off!" **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICES**

Wax on, wax off

Hilary Price, vice-president of Benefit Cosmetics Brow Bars, gives good brow. Even a devoted plucker can see a big difference after Price shapes her eyebrows with wax. They're better groomed and more proportionate, and there's no redness or irritation.

It's all in the wax

Price attributes it to Benefit's top-secret wax formula. "The perfect wax is like finding the holy grail," says Price. "Ours is an imported wax from France. It's moisturizing, gentle. It captures the hair but doesn't irritate the skin."

Here are the top three brow boo-boos, according to Price:

- **Too far apart:** "People start their brows out way too far from the centre. It makes your nose look wide and it makes your eyes look too far apart."
- **Too thin:** "Too thin is a big problem. I see it a lot and it makes me crazy. Step away from the tweezers."
- **Unstyled:** "Some people don't do enough. They clean up the strays but they don't look at styling their brows as an opportunity." Price suggests getting a professional shaping every three or four weeks, depending on how much hair you have and how fast it grows. Maintain the shape with tweezers between treatments.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICES

Women make up 80 per cent of Canada's health-care workforce: study

MEDICINE It's no surprise that women dominate health-care occupations in Canada, but a new study attaches some numbers to the situation.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information says women make up about 80 per cent of the health-care workforce.

Women continue to dominate in nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, and their ranks are increasing in male-dominated health-care professions.

Last year, the institute says 56 per cent of family doctors under age 40 were women, while in the 60-and-over group, only 15 per cent of family doctors were women. And 64 per cent of pharmacists under 40 last year were women.

There are more than one million people working in health-care occupations in Canada, the institute says.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Teens who self-harm need non-judgmental help: Study

CELIA MILNE
for Metro Canada

A new U.S. study suggests teens who self-harm need non-judgmental listening and minimizing harm rather than strict control and suicide watch.

Teens who deliberately harm themselves — usually by cutting or burning — are often dealing with stress, depression, or anxiety, and trying to relieve their emotional pain through physical pain.

"Recognize what deliberate self-harm is: A voice on the skin, a cry for help when they are either unable to voice their pain or when no one listens," says Dr. Jacqueline Mangnall, a psychiatric nurse and Chairperson of the Department of Nursing at Jamestown College in North Dakota.

Dr. Mangnall and colleagues reviewed the medical literature on self-harm and also spoke to many people who had cut themselves, to find the best ways of dealing with self harm. The study was published in the July 2008 issue of the journal Perspectives in Psychiatric Care.

An earlier Canadian study revealed how common this practice is here: Almost one in six teenagers deliberately harm themselves by cutting, burning or other self-harming behaviours, according to a report in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

Girls are twice as likely as boys to self-harm. Teens who cut are not usually trying to commit suicide, but rather to find a release of their emotional pain; some have been abused in the past.

The practice is highly addictive and very difficult to treat once it takes hold.

Standard treatment for these kids is to place them in a highly restrictive environment or to place them on suicide precautions, says Dr. Mangnall. They often feel like they are being punished — rather than listened to — for their behaviour. "Most of the women that I talked to regarding their self-harm stated that no one had actually allowed them to talk about their self-harm behaviours," she says.

Dr. Mangnall believes treatment programs that listen to kids, teach them other coping mechanisms, and minimize the harm they do to themselves may be more effective than completely forbidding any form of self-harm.

Her advice to friends and families of teenagers who cut themselves? "Recognize that deliberate self-harm is not the problem but a symptom of something deeper."

For instance, if a teen cuts as a way of dealing with earlier abuse or neglect, it is the abuse or neglect — not just the cutting — that needs to be dealt with in therapy.

She adds, "even though it is a coping mechanism, it is a maladaptive one and we must find ways to help those who self-harm to find more adaptive ways of coping."

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Learning Curve is a monthly feature that focuses on education and student life.

Learning Curve

SPECIAL FEATURES EDITOR: STEPHANIE BOMBA, STEPHANIE.BOMBA@METRONEWS.CA

Help 101

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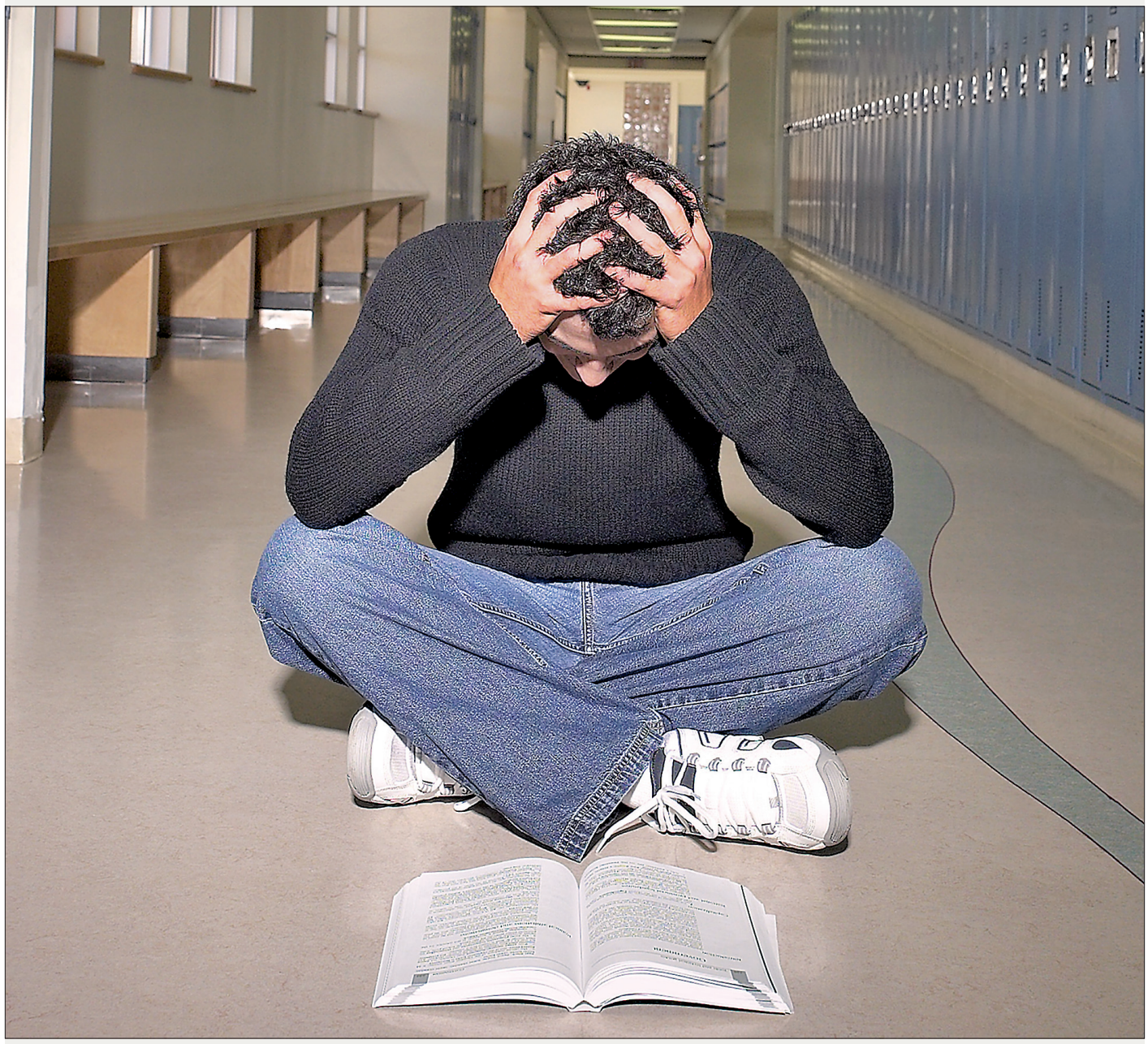

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Continuing Ed

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Boot Camp targets aspiring filmmakers in Toronto.

Recruitment

Pg 33

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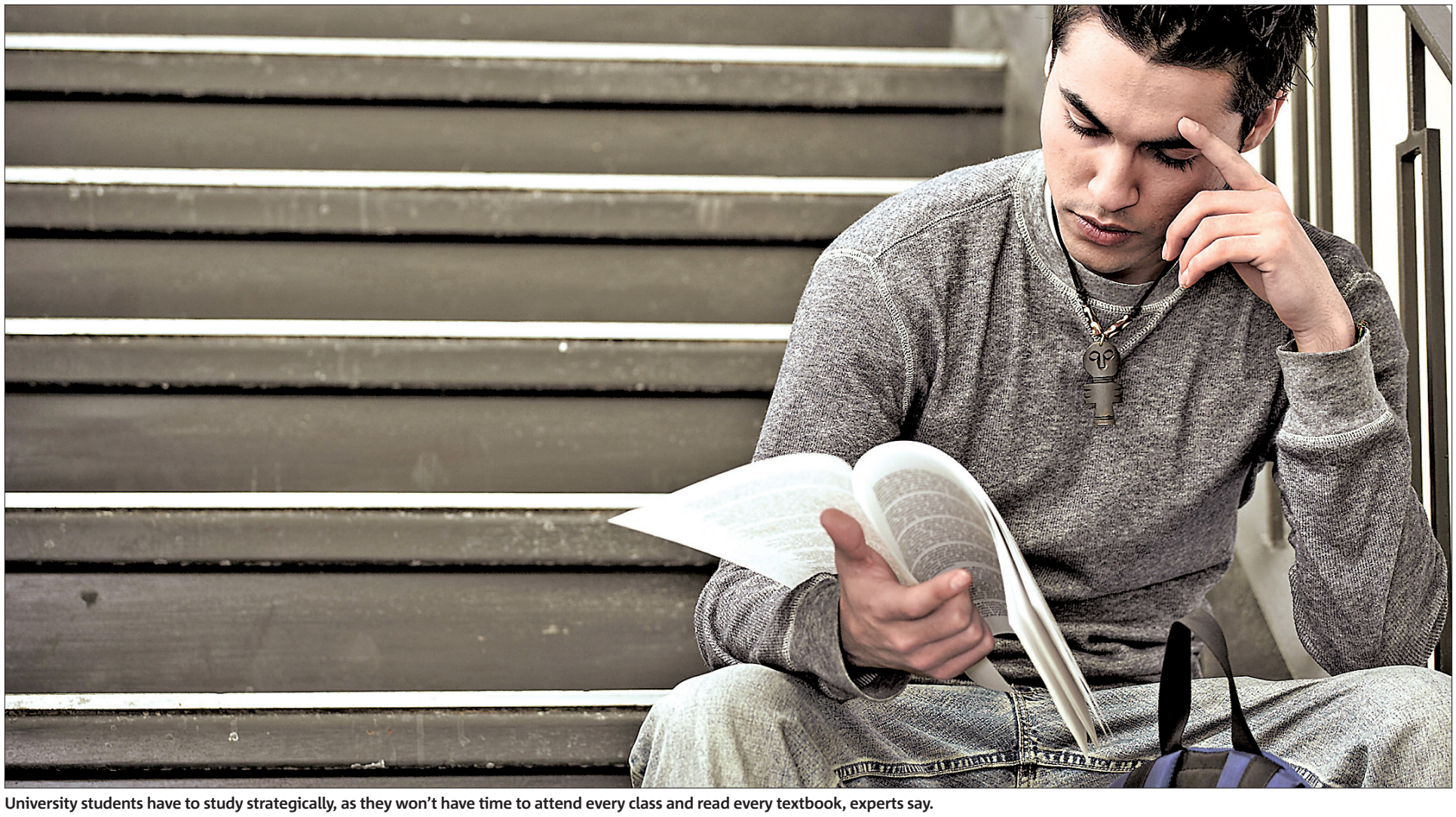

University students have to study strategically, as they won't have time to attend every class and read every textbook, experts say.

No shame in getting help

Plenty of help available for those students having trouble succeeding in school

JON TATTRIE
for Metro Canada

Students whose intelligence and work ethic saw them ace high school may crash and burn when they hit university. They may be in the wrong course, overwhelmed by the huge change in lifestyle, or just studying wrong — but help is at hand.

Marsha Padfield is the head of the University of Alberta's Fresh Start program. It's designed for students who have failed first year.

"We spend quite a lot of time figuring out what went wrong," Padfield says. "That may be in their personal life, may be emotional or physical things, may be lack of academic skills, wrong faculty — it's an extensive process."

Once they've figured out what went wrong they start to put it right. Padfield says a lack of academic skills are often the root of the problem, especially for bright students.

"They have to have study skills and they haven't developed them," she says. "We say that it's not time management, it's learning how to manage yourself within time. You can't change the time," she laughs. "You need to make better choices. You cannot party every night."

"You can't work 30 hours a week and take a full-time course load. I don't care who you are, you can't do it."
Marsha Padfield

Fresh Start, which turns around an impressive 60 per cent of the students it works with, makes sure people are studying what they want, not what their parents want. In some cases, a trade school is a better fit for the student's ambitions.

"Some of it is basic, smack-between-the-eyeballs stuff: You can't work 30 hours a week and take a full-time course load. I don't care who you are, you can't do it," Padfield says.

Nellie Perret, a counsellor at the University of Toronto, agrees.

Get help, she says. There's no shame in sitting down with a counsellor or registrar and making sure you're in the right place and putting in enough work. But work smart, not just hard.

"The (study) strategies they've used in the past aren't necessarily going to serve them well here," she explains. Some high school students excelled by attending every class and reading every textbook. They won't have time to do that at university, so students have to study strategically.

If the test is multiple choice, study with a greater attention to facts and details. If it's essay exams, focus on the big picture. If the lecturer teaches largely out of the book, then perhaps you don't need to read it as closely and can devote that time to other areas.

Adrenaline junkies may find that the last minute at university is not as long as it was in high school. "There's just way too much material to process and big, cumulative exams. They've got to learn how to pace themselves," Perret says. "It's about being a little more savvy about university culture."

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Course targets wannabe stars

NOELLE MUNARETTO
for Metro Canada

The Aspiring Filmmakers Boot Camp, which gives participants the chance to pitch story ideas to Hollywood producers, runs from Dec. 12-14.

Ever dreamed of producing the next Hollywood blockbuster, thought about winning an Oscar or imagined your name on a walk of fame? Whatever your tinsel town fantasy may be, Larry Meistrich is making sure that wannabe industry insiders get the cold hard facts about the nature of the movie business.

"People view the entertainment industry as something they can easily get into," he says. "I like to call that bluff."

Meistrich, an Academy Award-winning producer and founder of NEHST Studios, is bringing his Aspiring Filmmakers Boot Camp workshop to Toronto to educate people about the barriers they face getting their ideas into theatres.

During the three-day program, Meistrich and Sex and the City co-producer Antonia Ellis will teach participants everything from financing a film to hiring a crew and securing distribution.

"Paths are really closed for most people, so we thought we'd try to set something up and give people a voice to break into the industry," he says. "We're trying to give people some real insight by saying that this is a business, and it's a hard business."

Most importantly, Meistrich says the workshop will give people a venue to showcase their original material though group pitch sessions.

"We actually teach people how to pitch, and then at the end of the weekend we actually let them do it," he says. "We're a well-funded studio, so you're pitching to somebody who can make a decision."

Meistrich has done more than 40 deals through boot camp workshops. NEHST Studio's latest feature film, Running America, is directed and produced by individuals who came through a boot camp in Cleveland, Ohio.

Aside from the touring boot camps, Meistrich also hosts one-on-one pitch sessions in the New York area. He says people come from all over North America for those sessions just to sell their ideas without an agent or manager.

Though some of his industry counterparts think he's crazy for sourcing talent through boot camps, Meistrich says he wouldn't have it any other way.

"Hollywood has become very stale. It's the same 300 people every year making the same movies over and over again," he says. "I do believe in the premise that there are a lot of good ideas out there from people outside of the system."

Aspiring Filmmakers Boot Camp will run from Dec. 12-14. There is a $395 workshop fee with student discounts also available. For more information and registration, visit filmboot.com.

Professional development courses increasing in popularity

SUZANNE BOWNESS
for Metro Canada

Professional development is increasingly important to today's workplaces, but meeting the need for focused and timely education is something the University of Ottawa's Professional Training Service has been doing for years.

The service offers courses in everything from practical grammar to analytical thinking to executive correspondence to French skills for English speakers, in one- to four-day sessions that can be arranged in-house at a workplace. Not surprisingly given the program's Ottawa roots, the service sees a lot of government clients, but the service is equally popular among private sector and non-governmental associations, as well as self-employed individuals with an interest in updating their skills.

Director Sylvain Leduc notes the program really took off during the 1990s and remains popular today. "Clients are very happy about the results, and we have a lot of loyal customers," says Leduc. "People have come back for multiple courses over the years."

For professionals, the classes offer a chance to target their learning. Classes are capped at 16 participants for writing courses and 12 for management-type courses, with a focus on interaction. A tight screening process for instructors draws from University of Ottawa alumni, as well as professors and consultants, and focuses on finding teachers with an emphasis on professional experience. Particularly with the case of in-house courses, instructors will collect writing samples in order to tailor the training and zero in on any weaknesses.

"It's one thing for students to attend a class for 45 hours over a semester, but these learners want something dense, focused, and concentrated," says Leduc.

At the end of the course students receive a certificate of completion, as well as web tools to continue learning on their own.

While regular courses are based in Ottawa, the Professional Training Service sends out 20,000 brochures across Canada twice a year to offer its courses to workplaces across the country. As a result, the service has facilitated courses from locations in the West all the way to the Atlantic provinces. All registration and placement tests are done online, and employers generally contact the service's project co-ordinators through their website.

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Labatt Canada's Management Trainee Program recruits participants from universities all across Canada.

Program focuses on management trainees

ERIC EMIN WOOD
for Metro Canada

"We set you up with the expectation that you will be one of our future leaders."
Amy Secord

Attention soon-to-be business graduates: Do you want to work for a dynamic international company that will give you the chance to learn directly from upper management and possibly receive a discount on beer at the same time?

If you answered "yes," then Labatt Canada's Management Trainee Program could be the perfect experience for you. Recruitment takes place across Canada, from UBC to Dalhousie.

"Our head office is based in Toronto, so the final panel interviews would be there, but once they're hired, the candidates rotate through many of our different breweries and sales offices across Canada," says Amy Secord, Labatt's manager of talent acquisitions. Recruits could end up positioned in Halifax or Vancouver as easily as Toronto.

This year, the North American program had more than 3,000 applicants, which the company filtered through a series of five interviews down to 15.

"We're very passionate about the program and we really make sure that we take the time in advance to make sure that we get the right people in," says Secord.

Once chosen, the graduates are put through what Secord calls a "10-month cross-functional training program," in which hirees are sent to the international headquarters of InBev, Labatt's parent company, in Leuven, Belgium, followed by two months in the company's largest six Canadian breweries, two months in the commercial sales department, one month in the company's corporate offices, and a five-month project that could be anywhere in the country.

The program's retention rate is more than 90 per cent. "We've just given this week's offers to our fourth year of candidates," Secord says. "It's a really exciting time for us."

Alexis Smith was attending the University of Western Ontario when she first heard about the program. Now in her fourth month, she's currently stationed in Montreal.

"I went to the info session, and was really impressed because there were actually 10 or 15 people there representing Labatt," she says. "It showed me how much the company values the program."

The position is paid, but it's an experience you can't put a dollar figure on, Secord says.

"You come out of school, you're exposed to every single area of our company, and we set you up with the expectation that you will be one of our future leaders," she says.

To apply for the Labatt management trainee program, log on to inbev.com/go/careers.

Humber courses go green

Classes includes games and hands-on nature activities

NOELLE MUNARETTO
for Metro Canada

Educators at Humber College's Urban Ecology Centre, through a series of new courses and certificate programs, have made it their mission to equip future generations with a wealth of environmental knowledge.

The 13 courses are three hours in length and touch upon everything from ecosystems theory to environmental literacy. They can also be used towards two certificates of participation: Thinking Environmentally and Environmental Education.

Rebecca Niblett, a nature interpreter at the Centre for Urban Ecology, developed the new courses and will also be teaching them come February. She says that although many of the courses are geared towards educators, they are also suited to anyone who has a general interest in the environment.

"People really want to do something about the environment but it's so difficult to know what it is that they should do," she says. "We're trying to get people together, empower them, build towards action, and learn from ideas so they can develop their own views and values of environmentalism."

Niblett, who holds both a masters in environmental studies and certificate in environmental and sustainability education, says the courses will be taught in a fun way using the popular education method.

"You start with the knowledge that students bring themselves and then you build upon that," she says of the concept. "Learning centres around the learner rather than the teacher."

That means participants can look forward to interactive games, group discussions and hands-on nature activities.

One of courses in the Thinking Environmentally certificate even focuses on how to stay hopeful about the deteriorating state of the planet.

"A lot of people feel a lot of fear and despair about the environment," says Niblett. "We need to talk about those things instead of just ignoring them and pretending they're not there."

The courses will be held in Humber's 5,000-sq.-ft. Centre for Urban Ecology, which boasts a slew of environmentally-friendly design features, such as passive solar heat sources and a green roof. Opened in April 2007, the space received prestigious LEED Gold certification from the Canada Green Building Council.

Barb Fox, co-ordinator of the Centre for Urban Ecology, says the new courses, the centre and the surrounding Humber arboretum are a perfect match.

"The courses are going on in a building that represents exactly what these courses are trying to teach the public," says Fox.

"We've got 220 acres here that are unique to the city of Toronto. You're not going to go anywhere else in the city and find the diversity of life or the diversity of habitat we've got here."

TORY ZIMMERMAN/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

One of the many ponds within the 200-plus acres of the Humber Arboretum and Centre for Urban Ecology grounds. The centre sits back right, and is a certified LEED building.

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Learning Curve is a monthly feature that focuses on education and student life.

Don't wait until graduation to start looking for a job

GetSmart

Tracy Rogers
tracy.rogers@senecac.on.ca

As the year comes to an end and we look toward 2009 with aspiration and anticipation, it is important to consider what may lay ahead for you this coming year.

Will you be a post-secondary graduate in 2009 and looking for your first professional opportunity? If so, now is the time to begin planning out your career path and getting information. Most students wait until they graduate to begin looking for a job. I say start now — by doing some research and gathering information on future job opportunities, as well as industry standards, you just may stay ahead of the competition.

An important part of networking and learning about an occupation or a company is to conduct an informational interview: Meet with an employer to learn more about a particular career and/or specific company. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that most people are willing to talk about the work they do. This will provide valuable information to you as you forecast where you want to be in 2009.

When planning an informational interview, start by approaching any of the following people either by phone or by e-mail, and asking for just 10-15 minutes of their time:

- The human resources representative at a company you would like to work for;
- The manager of a department you would like to work in or a person doing the job you are interested in;
- A friend or relative you know, working in the field.

For the interview, arrive prepared to ask insightful questions as well as answer questions about yourself — bring your resumé for them to keep on file for future opportunities. This is your chance to make a contact in the career field, so begin on a positive note. Be professional, prepared and approachable.

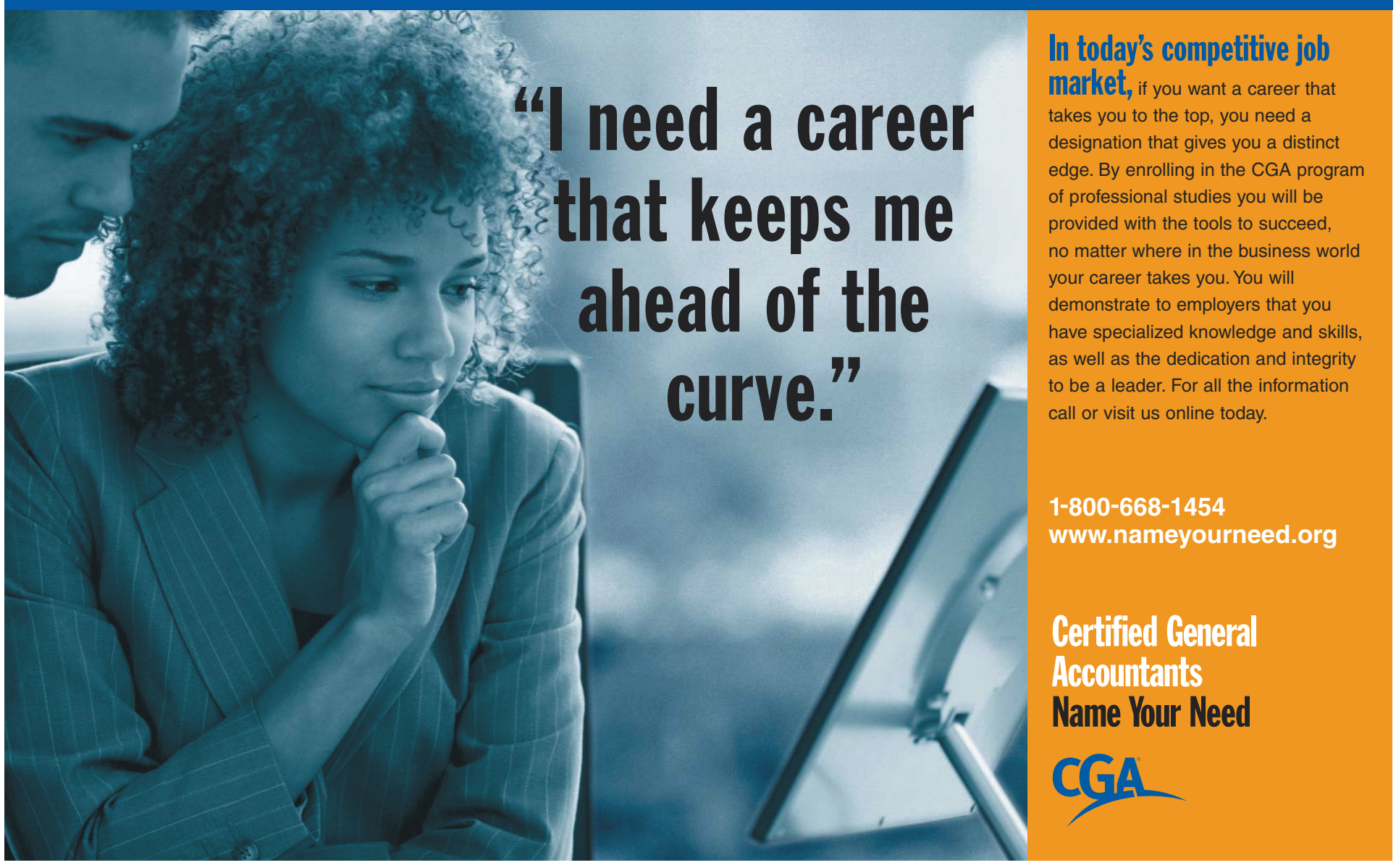
Some sample questions you could use may include:

- What are the skills/qualifications required for a specific job?
- Is there growth in the career field?
- How could a typical day on the job be described?
- What do you like/dislike about this type of work?

After the meeting, follow up with a thank you note to demonstrate your appreciation of their time. It also provides a courteous close to your interaction and signals your openness for future contact.

Don't wait until you graduate. Make the most of 2009; create a plan, get informed and get ready for a fantastic year.

Tracy Rogers is the Career Services co-ordinator for Seneca College, Seneca@York Campus.



Potential in job market

Opportunities still exist despite economy: Experts

ERIC EMIN WOOD
for Metro Canada

If companies don't hire now, then when they need experienced workers in the future, they're not going to exist, experts say.

As they prepare for their final term of university, soon-to-be graduates can be forgiven for fearing their job prospects are dim, given the current economic climate. But many employment services representatives say the opportunities haven't changed nearly as much as students might think.

Campus job postings "have changed slightly," says Ian Ingles, employment services co-ordinator with Ryerson University's career centre. "But using that as a gauge of what's happening, we haven't seen a big downturn in the number of employers coming on campus to recruit. We had three job fairs this fall, and they were all about the same as last year."

Like many schools, Ryerson has two sets of fairs: three in the fall term and three in the winter.

"It's still too early to tell" if attendance at the winter fairs will be lower than last year, says Ingles. But for now, companies such as Nortel, which recently implemented a hiring freeze despite "recruiting at the engineering, science and hi-tech fair back in September," are the exception, he says.

In Halifax, Dalhousie University has experienced its "busiest, most robust year ever," says Laura Addicott, director of the school's career services centre. "The activity has been outstanding in terms of the quality and quantity of opportunities for today's graduating students," she says.

Major employers include the public sector — "the federal government has really turned itself into a major recruiter on university campuses," Addicott says — the mining sector, and financial and technology companies.

Like Ingles, Addicott says it's difficult to measure the current effects of the downturn, since recruitment at university campuses is concentrated in the fall term.

At the University of Alberta, the number of job postings are below 2007 levels, but above 2006 levels, says Carey Castillo, manager of employer relations at the university's career centre — and 2007 "was a very strange year. Employers were under a lot of pressure to hire people," she says.

Certain sectors, such as finance, have been affected, Castillo says. "We have talked to organizations who maybe planned to hire 100 this year and have scaled it back to 70. But it doesn't mean that they're not hiring anybody," she says.

Castillo says one factor remains constant regardless of the economic climate: If companies don't hire now, then in the future when they need experienced workers, they're not going to exist.

"It's in their interest to maintain what hiring they possibly can," she says.

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Students get competitive

BRIAN TOWIE
brian.towie@metronews.ca

At the upcoming Inter-Collegiate Business Competition, students will have to race against the clock — and other teams — to win.

Nick Hultink is preparing for what could be the greatest challenge he's ever faced.

The Brock University business student, now in his final year, is taking part in the Inter-Collegiate Business Competition — the oldest and largest undergraduate business competition in the country — at Queen's University from Jan. 9-11. Hultink and his partner, Joel Ayotte, will go toe-to-toe with the cream of the crop from business schools from all over Canada, delivering creative and effective solutions to business cases that a panel of judges will present to them.

Hultink, who is competing in the marketing category, is feeling enormous pressure, but is confident that even if he doesn't win the gold medal and glory, he will represent his school strongly.

"I was really honoured to be picked to represent my school," said Hultink, 22. "The selection process was fairly competitive, and to come back with a gold medal would really be a story worth speaking about. The judges are well-connected in the industry and many of the Fortune 500 companies are aware of participants in this competition, whether they win or not."

"It's important to us; what we do reflects our school."
Nick Hultink

To even be considered to compete a student must have a grade point average of 3.0 or 80 per cent at least, says Hultink, with background checks done for evidence of professionalism. If you win the right to represent your school, the real work begins: Hultink says his team has clocked in at least 40 hours of solving practice cases in order to sharpen itself up for the tournament — on top of his already heavy course load and in-class time.

"The answer is sleep less," Hultink laughs. "The final weekend before the competition we'll be putting in close to 25 hours over a period of three days. But it's important to us; what we do reflects our school."

On the day, the Brock marketing team will have at least five hours to come up with a solution to a business case, and only 20 minutes to present it to a panel of judges.

The keys to victory, Hultink says, are the abilities to think creatively and present ideas in a concise manner. But with a can-do attitude and some quick thinking, Hultink says he and his partner can pull out a win.

"I'm excited. The work we're producing is quality and we're going to back up the reputation that our school gets as being one of the best," he said. "Our job is to be proactive and give the judges a more 'Wow' then they usually get."

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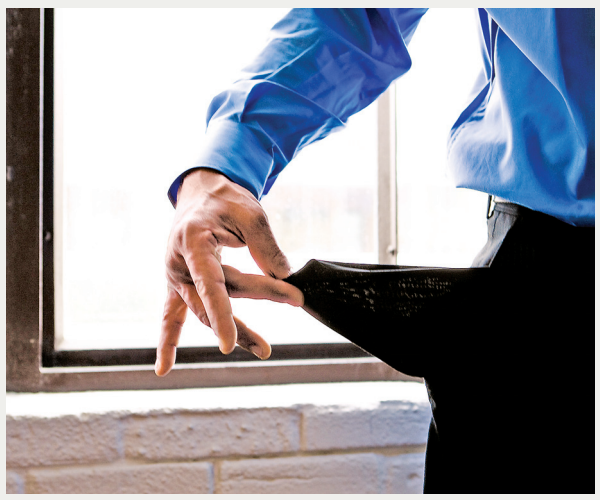

If you've blown your weekly budget, make it up by cutting some costly events out of your social calendar.

Need a little extra cash for the holidays? Consider these helpful hints to ensure you have the wherewithal to stash a little more under the family tree.

- **Work out a budget.** Determine how much money you're going to be able to spend on friends and family, and subtract that from the money you'll need to see yourself through the coming weeks.
- **Use your credit card sparingly.** Those credit card bills that you'll get in January will accumulate if you're not careful now.
- **Have some "no money fun" during your time off from school.** This can include getting together with friends for some flag football or playing an old board game. You don't need cash to have a good time.
- **Blown your weekly budget?** Make up for it next week by cutting extraneous and costly events out of your social calendar.
- **Keep a log of what you spend your money on.** It will give you some idea as to what your biggest expenses are, and where you can cut corners to keep that jingle in your pocket. Example: Do you really need a non-fat, half-cap latte in the morning, or can you make do with regular coffee?

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Learning Curve is a monthly feature that focuses on education and student life.

Pat Krajewski recently received the MBA Alumnus of the Year Award from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Laurier alumnus honoured

From the ground floor to the boardroom, extra schooling can help any business professional. Just ask Pat Krajewski.

The senior vice-president of international banking human resources at Scotiabank recently received the MBA Alumnus of the Year Award from Wilfrid Laurier University for her work in investment banking, global risk management and human resources.

"It felt great to receive this award," says Krajewski, who also serves as a vice chair of Laurier's board of governors. "You give to the community at Laurier not expecting to get back."

After more than 30 years with Scotiabank, Krajewski says Laurier's MBA program, which she graduated from in 1990, helped her to hone her business acumen and apply it to her daily work.

"It's a great learning experience because you learn from unlikely sources and one of the best things you can do is keep an open mind," she said. "Your classmates come from all sorts of professional backgrounds, not just business.

"Along with teaching you the basics about finance, the program teaches risk management and how to analyze companies. It also instills confidence and the ability to respond to challenges by thinking outside of the box."

Though if you're interested in the program, Krajewski says you'll have to put in some very long hours. Luckily, she had a strong support system in place so she could have the time to study: Scotiabank granted her a leave of absence so she could pursue her MBA, and her family picked up the slack by pitching in more at home.

"There's a ratio of homework hours to class hours that they say you need to fulfill to do well in the program. Whatever they say it is, it's actually more," laughs the recipient of the Governor-General's gold medal for academic excellence.

"To be successful, I had a very supportive family and I'm fortunate enough to have a supportive employer that takes a keen interest in developing its people. That's a big key."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Music teacher of the year named

Amid rapturous applause from students and cheering by members of the Tragically Hip, Alex Voros was honoured last week as Canada's music teacher of the year.

Voros, of Toronto's Chaminade College School, received the award for his 30 years of work in promoting musical education and for encouraging students of all backgrounds to learn an instrument.

"Whether they've played an instrument before, regardless of their musical experience they are welcomed ... they have everything that they need to make music," he said of the school's music program, and paraphrased a famous Friedrich Nietzsche quote: "Life without music is a mistake."

NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Music teacher Alex Voros.

Voros, 60, said he was thrilled to have the Tragically Hip on hand to present the award and listen to the school's 70-member concert band, which performed the theme song to the film The Godfather and a medley of other tunes.

"It means a great deal to have international recording artists, through the presentation of this award, support and advocate for music education," he said, adding he accepted the award on behalf of music teachers across Canada.

Tragically Hip singer Gord Downie said the band was honoured to acknowledge Voros' talents and the work of all music educators.

"Alex Voros isn't just teaching, he's making introductions, he's introducing you to a lifelong friend," Downie told the school's students.

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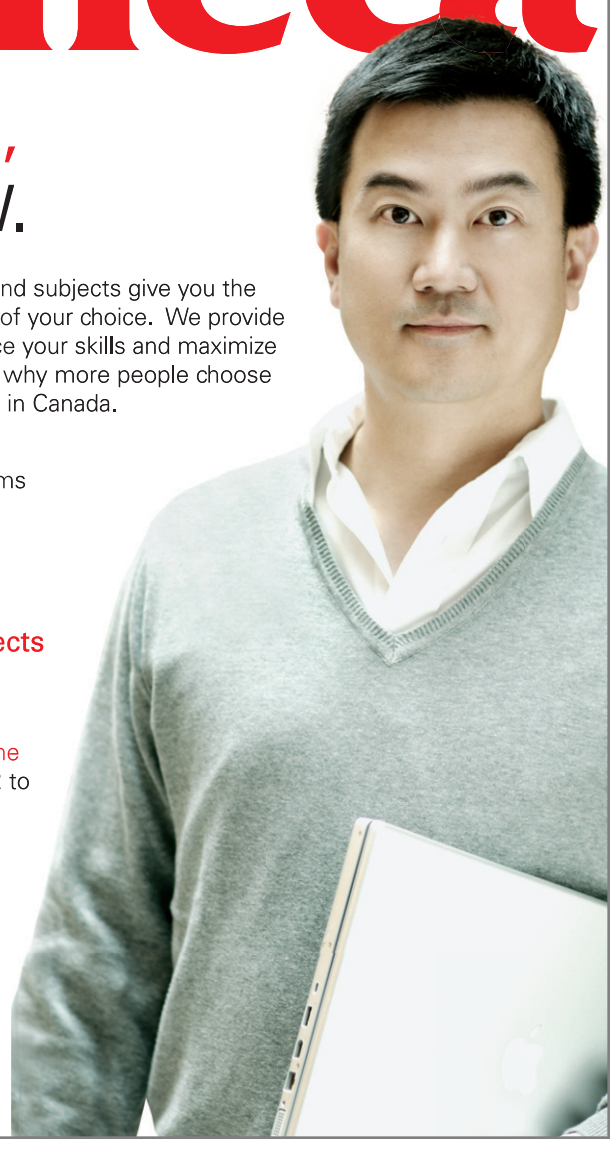


Brock could eliminate three-year degrees

Some Brock University administrators are proposing the elimination of three-year degrees by 2014. The reason behind the plan is the termination of OAC in Ontario high schools. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Workology

Butting out

Alberta-based Action on Smoking & Health released its report card on provincial post-secondary institutions' tobacco funding policies. Out of the 22 institutions reviewed, 19 received "D" grades. The University of Alberta received an "F" for investing in tobacco companies. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: DOUGLAS DUNLOP, DOUGLAS.DUNLOP@METRONEWS.CA

Giving you Your Celebrity Moment

Company wants you to realize you're worth it

Small Business

RAFAEL BRUSILOW
for Metro Canada

RAFAEL BRUSILOW/FOR METRO CANADA

Your Celebrity Moment founder Marlina Kinnersley wants to give you a "personalized celebrity experience."

Always wanted to be swooned over by paparazzi at a red-carpet premiere but never had the chops to get the celebrity treatment? A new Toronto company wants to give you a chance to feel like a celebrity for one night.

Offering a "personalized celebrity experience," Your Celebrity Moment (YCM) gives anyone with the desire — and the cash — a chance to be treated like a celebrity for an evening. Think stylists, bodyguards, limo pick-up, red carpet entry into clubs and restaurants and even a wall of paparazzi to give you the full Hollywood experience. Feeling particularly ambitious, or vain? Have a loyal entourage shadow you like adoring lapdogs or a get videographer to record the whole thing live and guerrilla-style.

YCM's founder, Marlina Kinnersley, says the whole point is to let people have celebrity fun in a satisfying, exciting way.

"It's all about making people feel like a star for a day and turning their 15 minutes of fame into a whole night. It's for anybody to feel like celebrities feel," Kinnersley said.

Kinnersley works closely with limo companies, night club owners and photographers to customize each client's experience — some prefer a more traditional affair with limo, bodyguards and a few photographers while others want the authenticity to go even further, complete with screaming fans and taunting paparazzi.

YCM also offers nightlife tours of a more traditional bent, taking away the hassles of planning for a perfect night out with friends or any special occasion.

"I allow you to leave your wallet at home," Kinnersley said.

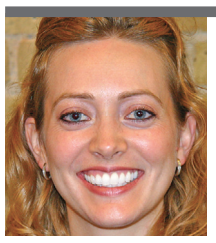
A native of Victoria, B.C., Kinnersley came to Toronto a year ago to start her own business after having worked in the marketing and advertising industries. She heard of firms offering personalized celebrity experiences in Europe and the U.S. but realized nothing of the sort was being offered in Canada. She saw her chance to offer something new and YCM was born in April of this year. Starting out wasn't easy, particularly because the idea is so new in Canada, but Kinnersley says her sense of perseverance has been key in getting the business running.

"It was scary at first but very exciting. It's taken a lot longer than I thought (to get started) but I'm very ambitious, driven and motivated. I'm totally a believer in hard work and seizing the moment and the opportunity," she said.

Buoyed by early successes and interest, Kinnersley hopes to spread the company to all major markets across Canada, starting with Montreal and Vancouver next year.

"Being able to say, 'I brought this to Canada,' that's thrilling," she said.

Check out yourcelebritymoment.com to indulge your ego for one night.



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Marlina Kinnersley

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Corbett hopeful for Sex sequel
Sex And The City star John Corbett is keen to reprise his role in the hit TV show for a sequel to this year's hit movie. Corbett reportedly hopes his character will be able to steal Carrie back from Mr. Big. **IMDB.COM**

Entertainment

Streep honours
Meryl Streep is up for awards in her roles in Doubt and Mamma Mia! at 13th annual Satellite Awards in Los Angeles Dec. 14.
IMDB.COM

EDITOR: TINA COSTANZA, TINA.COSTANZA@METRONEWS.CA

G-strings and honesty; a mantra, T-Pain-style

JIM REYNO
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PHOTO SUBMITTED

T-Pain prides himself, his music and latest album Thr33 Rings on honesty.

T-Pain's got a G-string thing, and he's not afraid to show it.

The 24-year-old hip-hop/R&B star pours his heart and his life into his music. He doesn't hide the facts from anybody — especially his wife.

And the fact is, T-Pain enjoys strippers. He had a hit with I'm N Luv (Wit a Stripper) two years ago. On his new album, Thr33 Ringz, he wrote the song Long Lap Dance to ensure clients get their money's worth at the club.

So is an appreciation of exotic dancers something a married man with two children — and another on the way — should be revealing? Sure!

"My wife is usually in the strip club with me," T-Pain said in a recent interview in Toronto. "I take her where I go. Everything I talk about, she knows …

"She knows the exact situation sometimes. She knows what stripper I was talking about because she probably got a dance from her, too."

That heart-on (the sleeve, I mean) approach to music permeates Thr33 Rings, which features plenty of catchy hooks, guest stars and strong vocals from T-Pain.

And he doesn't just sing about strippers. The understated, acoustic Keep Going is a shout out to the support he's received from wife Amber and the rest of his family.

T-Pain, born Faheem Rasheed Najm in Tallahassee, Fla., has already exceeded his career expectations by releasing Thr33 Ringz — his third CD.

"I didn't think I was going to come this far at all, you know what I'm saying?" said T-Pain, sporting his trademark shades and top hat at the Royal York.

Accolades

- Good Life, T-Pain's collaboration with Kanye West, won the Grammy for best rap song earlier this year.

"I thought I was going to have one album and people would hate me after that."

Far from it. Aside from his own projects, T-Pain is a frequent guest on other people's recordings, Chris Brown's Kiss Kiss and R. Kelly's I'm a Flirt (Remix) among the best known.

But whether performing on someone else's recording date or his own, T-Pain approaches the material the same way.

"Just be honest with it," he said. "People want to know you. As an artist, people really want to get to know me. That's why people feel like they know me before they meet me, because I put my whole life on my albums."

Straight up — no apologies.

"It's honesty, man," T-Pain said. "That's why no one can blackmail me. You only get blackmail when you've got something to hide."

Sound of Music stage carries weight of history

BRIAN COULTON
for Metro Canada

MUSIC Under a glowing spotlight, budding nun Maria lays in a bed of grass on a steep incline about 20 feet in the air. The light expands as her mouth does to belt out love for Mother Nature and melody. In chorus, the declivity on which she rests reveals itself to be a massive piece of hovering, tilt-able, mountain-dressed steel that pivots backward, transforming from slope to summit for Maria to run about, twirling. That's when you realize: The hills really are alive with The Sound of Music.

The famous mountain from the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical is the set linchpin covering most of the 40-some-foot-deep stage at Toronto's Princess of Wales Theatre in the recently extended Mirvish production.

On the phone from London where he first fashioned the musical set, Robert Jones, set and costume designer for Toronto's production, explained just how the mammoth mountain moves.

"It's on big motors that fly up and down, which then enable it to pivot on a centre point so you can change the angle," said Jones. "It can be flat. It can be steep. It's actually relatively simple, although it's a huge piece of machinery."

Jones used about 10 different location perspectives, by his count, of the four different sets he worked with: The abbey, the mountain, the von Trapp household and the concert hall where the Salzburg Music Festival takes place. It's the scene at that festival, on the verge of World War II, when the set takes an interactive turn. Swastika-covered red flags descend stage sides and the theatre's side seating boxes.

"It's really quite spooky because you can feel the mood in that auditorium when all those flags and banners come in," he said. "We wanted everyone to experience the oppression that was happening at that time."

Elicia MacKenzie stars as Maria in the Toronto production of The Sound of Music.

Entertainment in brief

PLATINUM BLONDE A funeral and memorial will be held in Toronto this week for former Platinum Blonde bassist Kenny MacLean, who was found dead last week in his apartment just days after performing at a CD release show. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Slumdog sweeps

Slumdog Millionaire scooped three top prizes at the British Independent Film Awards in London on Sunday. The film won the Best Director prize for Danny Boyle and Best Newcomer for teen actor Dev Patel. The picture also landed the Best Film award. **IMDB.COM**

Diamond renaissance

BRIAN TOWIE
brian.towie@metronews.ca

The good times have never seemed so good for Neil Diamond.

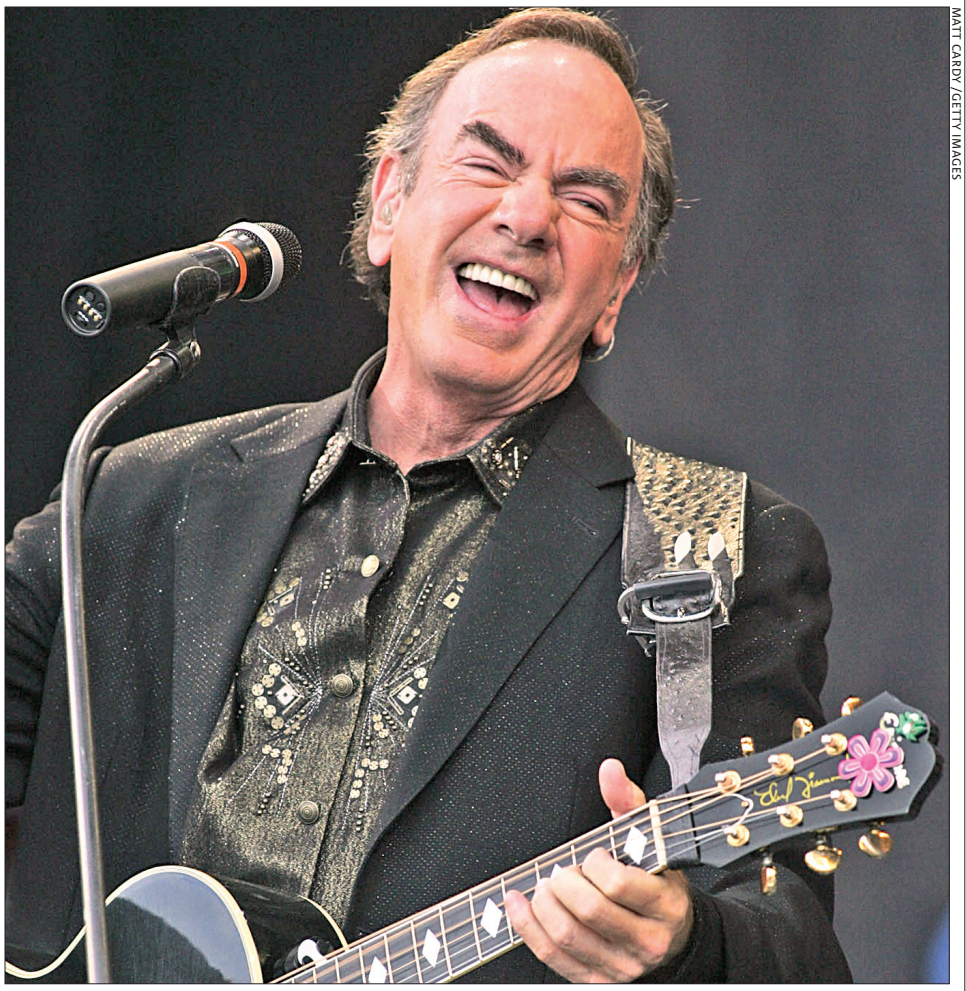
The legendary troubadour is enjoying a career renaissance, grossing $168 million US over his three most recent tours and releasing 46th album on the Billboard charts (you read that right) Home Before Dark.

Produced by Rick Rubin, lauded for his work on Johnny Cash's final releases, Diamond takes a downbeat approach — more than he's known for when you compare the album to his classics such as Sweet Caroline, I Am, I Said, America, and Holly Holy — with a stripped-down, drum-free sound. The change resonated with listeners, as the album became Diamond's first ever Number 1.

"Well, honestly I never paid much attention to it," Diamond said in a teleconference interview. "I am more focused on the quality of the album and not whether it makes it to number two or three or one. And frankly, it came as a surprise to me when I was told that this was my Number 1."

At 67, Diamond says his powerful baritone voice is as good as it ever has been, but he has somewhat muted his flamboyant showmanship. He is the first to admit he's getting on in years, and notes he's retired his ostentatious sequined outfits and wavy ebon coif.

"I did for years, I wore a very specific style. I wanted it to be fun. I wanted the shows to be fun," he said. "Rock and roll has always been lot of a circus to me and I never hesitated to make the costumes reflect that. But I guess now I'm kind of toning things down a little bit and feeling right about it.



MATT CARDY/GETTY IMAGES

Neil Diamond grossed $168 million US over his three most recent tours and released his 46th album — you read that right — Home Before Dark.

"Rock and roll has always been lot of a circus to me and I never hesitated to make the costumes reflect that. But I guess now I'm kind of toning things down a little bit."
Neil Diamond

"Feeling that it's appropriate and right for me at this point in my career and my life."

After more than 40 years in the music business, the singer-songwriter assures fans old and new that he has no plans to retire, continuing to crank out his megahits to the strong crowds that he draws.

"Maybe in 20 years from now, but not right now. This is what I do and I mean it's my official job," he said. "Every night is different, every song is different. And I couldn't think of a more exiting way to spend my life. I think Pavarotti once said, 'a life in music is a life well lived.' And I feel as though my life has been well lived thus far and I want to do it as long as I possibly can."

McKenna gets onstage

BRIAN COULTON
for Metro Canada

Canadian actor Patrick McKenna isn't hard up for acting experience on his CV.

He's had lengthy, Gemini Award-winning runs as nephew Harold Green on The Red Green Show and Marty Stephens on Traders, voiced characters for cartoons and appeared in CBC radio dramas — but he's never acted in the theatre before.

So when Martin Bragg, The Canadian Stage Company's artistic producer, called up the actor and asked him to make his stage debut in the company's adaptation of the Frank Capra film It's A Wonderful Life, McKenna jumped at the chance.

"With 15 seasons of Red Green, you can't really get a month off to rehearse a play and perform it for another month," says McKenna. "I had no idea what the process was going to be like. It's a lot of work!"

It's at least three times the workload he was expecting, to be exact. Shortly after accepting Bragg's invitation, McKenna learned he would be playing three different major characters in the production.

As this particular adaptation uses the radio drama format, 10 actors (plus an on-stage sound designer and pianist) are in charge of voicing 63 different characters. The stage appears as a 1940s radio station where the actors perform as voice actors who are performing the holiday classic; essentially delivering a play within a play.

As rough around the edges radio actor Charlie Bickwell, McKenna voices the roles of 243-year-old angel Clarence who's in waiting for his wings, and dunce-like Uncle Billy Bailey.

He says convincing the audience of which character they are hearing and effectively switching between characters have been his greatest challenges.

"My character was one of the few that would have to go from Uncle Billy wailing and crying and then suddenly to Clarence and being naïve. On TV you have time to take a break, go to the sandwich table," he chuckles, "but in here it's so immediate. The transfer had to be complete and clean."

McKenna says an added challenge is being constantly conscious of his stage movements when not at the microphone.

"That's what makes it so exhausting," he says. "Everybody's involved from lights up at 8 o'clock 'til 10:20 when they come down."

Details

Patrick McKenna

- Patrick McKenna appears in The Canadian Stage Company's It's A Wonderful life through December 20 at the Bluma Appel Theatre. Tickets may be purchased at the theatre box office, online at canstage.com or by calling (416) 368-3110.

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Ritchie on the market for NYC pub
Pop star Madonna's ex, filmmaker Guy Ritchie, is said to be making plans to open a new pub in New York. Ritchie already owns London pub The Punchbowl. **IMDB.COM**

Alleged abusive mom loses case over memoir

A British mother lost a libel suit yesterday against the daughter who claimed in a book that her childhood had been marred by emotional and physical abuse.

Constance Briscoe had defended her book, Ugly, as a true account of her suffering at the hands of her mother, Carmen Briscoe-Mitchell.

The jury returned a unanimous verdict in favour of Briscoe and her publisher, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., after a day of deliberations.

The book has sold more than half a million copies since its publication two years ago, and Briscoe has written a sequel, Beyond Ugly.

Testimony

- Briscoe testified that her mother beat her repeatedly with a stick for bed-wetting and called her a "dirty little whore."
- The abuse drove her to drink bleach in a suicide attempt and she had plastic surgery in response to her mother's taunts that she was ugly, Briscoe said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Briscoe, 51, is a lawyer and one of the first black women in Britain to be appointed a recorder or part-time judge.

Her mother's lawyer, William Panton, said Briscoe-Mitchell had struggled to bring up 11 children. He said Briscoe had never complained to her teachers, police or social services.

Briscoe's lawyer, Andrew Caldecott, said the home was "deeply unhappy" and that the mother was a strict disciplinarian who often clashed with her children.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANDREAS RENTZ/GETTY IMAGES

Pop star Britney Spears says she's ready to settle down again.

Spears speaks out on love, new life

CELEBRITY Pop star Britney Spears hasn't ruled out husband No. 3, foxnews.com reports. In a new interview with Glamour magazine, Spears said she hasn't given up on love.

"In five years, I would like to be married and have a father figure for my kids, someone who is a provider and can be really stable," Spears said.

"It's hard doing it on your own," she added.

But Spears is hardly the party girl she was just a few short years ago.

"I don't like going out," she said.

"I hate clubs. I hate being around too many people," she said. She loves her home and loves being in bed, She said she likes "watching Dancing With the Stars or reading a Danielle Steel novel. I'm kinda boring."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

DVD picks

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian

Director: Andrew Adamson
Rating: PG

THE PEVENSIE KIDS and their talking lion pal meet again in the followup to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. The new instalment of the C.S. Lewis fantasy adaptation casts the Pevensies (William Moseley, Georgie Henley, Anna Popplewell and Skandar Keynes) into the company of a new ally, Caspian (Ben Barnes), heir to the throne of Narnia, which has been hurled into dark times under a tyrannical ruler. Extras on the multi-disc sets include deleted scenes, cast and crew interviews and a tour of the movie's locations.

Wanted

Director: Timur Bekmambetov
Rating: R

ANGELINA JOLIE TAKES UP ARMS in this action tale about a team of assassins using their super-human abilities — and an ancient loom that spells out victims' names — to weed out unwanted people. Jolie and her boss (Morgan Freeman) recruit a loser (James McAvoy) and train him to use his dormant talents to go after a rogue member of their group. The movie comes in single-disc and two-disc DVD editions, a Blu-ray release and in collector's sets with a photo booklet, movie postcards and a framed 3-D film cell. Among the extras are segments on stunts and visual effects and a featurette.

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Hot Chip working on next record

Hot Chip guitarist Al Doyle says the electro quintet plan to record the followup to last February's Made In The Dark in the new year, but will take their time with it. **ANANOVA.COM**

Theatre arts stays strong among fears of recession, global economy sagging

ARTS The sound of symphonies and ballets filling Canadian concert halls appears to be drowning out the crashes of the faltering economy.

Fine arts groups across the country are reporting strong sales for the Christmas season despite growing fears that Canada is headed for a recession.

British Columbia's largest professional ballet company blamed poor ticket sales and the slumping economy when it laid off its dancers and staff last week.

But other groups say the gloomy news doesn't appear to be keeping their audiences at home.

Whether it's the Toronto Symphony, the Canadian Opera Company, Theatre Calgary or the touring Ballet Jorgen, many organizations across Canada say they've been seeing sales that are on par with or stronger than previous years.

But that hasn't been the case for Ballet British Columbia.

That organization says it is suffering from financial problems that now threaten the 22-year-old dance company's future appear to be an anomaly.

Ballet BC laid off its dancers and staff earlier than they would normally be temporarily let go for the holidays.

And the company says it has also warned that it could fold if the visiting Moscow Classical Ballet's Christmas performance of The Nutcracker doesn't sell out.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hurting economy affects millionaries, too: 50 Cent

With stock markets and real estate values plummeting, times are tough across the United States — even for rapper 50 Cent, who reportedly made $150 million US last year but is still anxiously watching his investment portfolio sink and multimillion-dollar mansion languish unsold.

BRYAN BEDDER/GETTY IMAGES

Rapper 50 Cent says he's hurting too from the economy crash.

The 33-year-old hip-hop mogul says he's not shy about lending his name to TV shows, movies, video games, clothes, sneakers, bottled water, body spray and condoms — in addition to selling his music, of course — because the last thing he wants is to be the next MC Hammer or Mike Tyson.

"Ten years ago that was actually taboo, for you to be associated with a major company or corporation — from a hip hop perspective, you was a sell out," he said in an interview.

"But those artists from that time period are... completely broke right now."

50 Cent — real name Curtis Jackson — actually bought Tyson's old home in Farmington, Conn., in 2003 for $4.1 million US. When 50 Cent put the 4,650-square-metre house up for sale, the listing mentioned its six kitchens, 19 bedrooms and 37 bathrooms. 50 Cent's additions included a 40-person hot tub and his own personal touches — stripper poles.

He's been trying to sell it for $18.5 million US for more than a year now and admits he's watching his money disappear. "I take the loss like everybody else."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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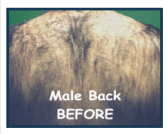

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Ramsay swears he didn't cheat
Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay has spoken out over allegations he cheated on his wife of 12 years, in his own inimitable style, calling the claims "b——." ANANOVA.COM

Rosie Live no longer

IntelleVision

I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO, BUT ... Like the famous story of the New Yorker movie critic who was shocked at Richard Nixon's re-election since she didn't know anyone who voted for him, I kept reading stories about Rosie O'Donnell's NBC variety show and wondered who would be watching the thing, since I was sure no one I knew was.

Maybe, I wondered, they were just hiding it — like married men who watch porn or women in journalism who liked Sarah Palin — and Rosie's little retro project/labour of love would hit TV like Katrina.

"Tonight, Rosie is offering up what could be the beginning of something big," anticipated Roger Friedman on the Fox News website last week, imagining Rosie Live as — I kid you not — an "American Idol killer."

As much as I might fervently wish to see such a thing, it was never meant to be.

"The faint hope of the rebirth of the variety show died tonight," wrote Michael Rowe on Vanity Fair's web site, among the apparently unanimous post-mortem chorus.

"Rosie, Rosie, what on Earth were you thinking?" wondered Mary McNamara of the Los Angeles Times.

"Were you thinking camp? Were you thinking this will be big and brassy and so-over-the-top even the dancing cupcakes will be irresistible?"

By this point you've probably figured out that no amount of money could have persuaded me to sit through Rosie Live, but the descriptions are intriguing, to say the least.

James Poniewozik describes "Alanis Morissette wearing what appeared to be Celine Dion's hair and wardrobe, singing a ballad while staring upward with unsettling intensity and standing in front of a karaoke video screen of flying geese."

"Liza came up from under the stage, 'cause that's where she's been living since 1982," wrote Vanity Fair's Rowe, clearly warming to the task. "She was shakier than the floorboards that were holding up Rosie.

"I heard that later at the after-party they used her to mix the martinis. She did sing ... Uh, well, it seemed to me that melody actually frightened her.

"It was as if she'd been conditioned with an electric dog collar, anticipating a high-powered zap whenever she barked out a note."

The good news is that, with just 5 million viewers, Rosie will be Live no more.

GETTY IMAGES
Rosie O'Donnell's new variety show was panned by critics.

"No ratings. bad reviews. yet still — a thrill 4 me," O'Donnell wrote on her blog with customary text-messaging economy, as NBC's grimly fascinating death spiral continues with increasing velocity.

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

Fey's husband talks about wife's scar

TELEVISION Tina Fey's husband is talking about something the 30 Rock actress would rather not discuss: The scar on her left cheek.

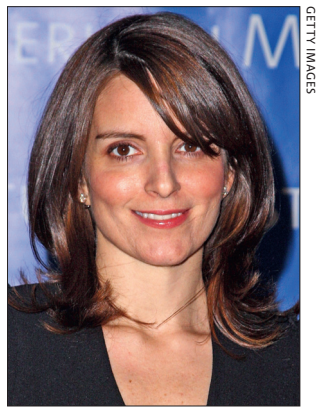
In an interview in Vanity Fair, Jeff Richmond says a stranger slashed Fey's face when she was five years old. He says the incident occurred in the front yard of her house.

Says Richmond: "That scar was fascinating to me. This is somebody who, no matter what it was, has gone through something. And I think it really informs the way she thinks about her life."

Fey says talking about the attack would seem like exploiting it.

Says Fey: "It's really almost like I'm able to forget about it, until I was on-camera, and it became a thing of, 'Oh, I guess we should use this side' or whatever. Everybody's got a better side.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS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primetime 12/2/08	265	353	2	TVO	Undersea Exp.	Parks	The Agenda With Steve Paikin		The Children (Part 3 of 3) (N)		The Mummy Diaries		Agenda-Paikin
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	210	302	6	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Rick Mercer	22 Minutes	The Tudors		CBC News: The National		The Hour
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	213	326	15	SUN	Scrubs	George Lopez	*A Christmas Carol* ★★★ (1938, Fantasy)			Girlfriends	To Serve and Protect		Grill Rm.
	-	387	16	CBS	Inside Edition	Hollywood	NCIS "Road Kill" (N)		The Mentalist (HDTV) (N)		Without a Trace (N)		News (N)
	-	385	17	NBC	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	The Biggest Loser: Families (N)				Law & Order: SVU		News (N)
	-	386	18	ABC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town		Toronto	According-Jim	Eli Stone (HDTV) (N)		News
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	-	-	28	FOX	Judge Judy (N)	Two/Half Men	House (HDTV PA) (N)		(9:01) Fringe "Safe"		Seinfeld	Two/Half Men	The Simpsons
	-	388	61	PBS	News-Lehrer	Keeping Up	Brain Fitness 2: Sight and Sound			Rodney Yee: The Practical Power of Yoga			Business Rpt.
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sports	405	417	22	net	World Combat League		The Ultimate Fighter		Best Damn Sports Show		Hockeycentral	NHL Hockey	
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family	417	406	81	SC	Pinks	Pass Time	Low Life	Low Life	Super Bikes!	Super Bikes!	Unique Whips	Hot Import	Pinks
	551	542	25	YTV	Malcolm-Mid.	Home Improve.	Malcolm-Mid.	Sabrina-Witch	Futurama	Prank Patrol	Mystery Hnt.	Adrenaline Proj	Mystery Hnt.
	554	544	45	TEL	Santa Claus	Bugs Bunny & Tweety Show		Wayside	Johnny Test	Futurama	American Dad	Robot Chicken	Rick & Steve
	556	540	51	FAM	Wizards-Place	That's-Raven	Zack & Cody	Natural-Sadie	Han. Montana	Life Derek	Ned's School	Cory in House	Zack & Cody
cable variety	602	567	27	W	Will & Grace	Friends	How to Look Good Naked		Style by Jury	Style by Jury	How to Look Good Naked (N)		Maxed Out
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	615	520	31	A&E	CSI: Miami "Invasion"		The First 48		The First 48 (HDTV)		The Rookies	The Rookies	The Rookies
	700	800	35	TLN	Centrovetrine	Sky TG 24	Serie A	Magnifica Italia	Nati Ieri		Raymond	Raymond	George Lopez
	571	581	36	MMM	mmmtop	Where You At	Listed		Popaganda		Don't Forget the Lyrics!		Party of Five
	575	583	38	CMT	Canada Countdown		Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Reba	Reba	Hope & Faith	Hope & Faith	Cheerleaders
	616	521	39	SHO	About a Girl	About a Girl	The Best Years (DVS)		Testees	Trailer Park	The Shield (N)		House
	620	523	40	BVO	Desperate Housewives		Live at the Rehearsal Hall		Let It Rock		Bravonews	Garrett Mason	Law & Order
	601	562	41	SLC	End of Leash	ET Canada	Wedding SOS	In Laws	Rich Bride, Poor Bride		Tori & Dean: Home		Wedding SOS
	522	506	43	HIS	NCIS "SWAK"		Outlaw Bikers		Ax Men "The Close Call"		NCIS "Twilight"		Crime Stories
	625	548	44	COM	Air Farce	Just for Laughs		Corner Gas	The Simpsons	South Park	S. Silverman	Flt.-Conchords	Daily Show
	600	564	46	H&G	House Hunters	Property Virgin	Pure Design	Style	Sarah's House	Design Inc.	Colin & Justin's Home Heist		Holmes-Homes
	294	529	47	TBS	House-Payne	House-Payne	*The Perfect Man* ★★ (2005, Romance-Comedy)				Cheers	Family Guy	Family Guy
	576	582	49	BET	106 & Park: BET's Top 10 Live		*The Salon* ★★ (2005, Comedy) Vivica A. Fox.				Keyshia Cole	Brother	Judge Hatchett
	627	528	50	SPC	Lost		Star Trek: Next Gener.		Battlestar Galactica		Rabbit Fall (N)	The Circuit	Stargate SG-1
	581	566	52	MTV	Busted	After	MTV News	Cribs	Paris Hilton's My New BFF		Paris Hilton's My New BFF (N)		MTV Live
	618	524	54	TROP	Beverly Hills, 90210		Planet Soap	What Happen?	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	King	Family Guy
	603	561	56	FOOD	The Main	Chef at Home	Restaurant Makeover		The F Word		Chef School	At the Table	Restaurant
	261	394	60	V	Murder, She Wrote		Bless-Father	On the Buses	Quantum Leap		Life and Times-McLachlan		MythQuest
	621	527	63	STR	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		TMZ (N)	etalk	Paris Hilton's My New BFF (N)		Paris Hilton's My New BFF (N)		TMZ
	553	546	65	TRE	Ni Hao, Kai-lan	Nght Grdn	Toot & Puddle	Franklin	Little Bear	Maggie-Beast	Comfy Couch	Rolie Polie Olie	Beren. Bears
	115	711	101	TVA	Occupation	Vidéos	Histoires-filles	Caméra café	La Promesse (N) (SC)		TVA 22 heures	(10:45) Denis Lévesque	
	126	730	102	RDI	24 Heures en 60 minutes		Grands reportages (SC)		Le Téléjournal (SC)		RDI en direct	Le National	Le Téléjournal
	526	507	249	VIVA	Judging Amy		Commander In Chief		The West Wing		Encounters	In Dreams	Psychic Inv.
	300	601	301	M1	*Summer House*	*Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus: Best of Both*			*Disturbia* ★★ (2007, Suspense)			(10:45) *They Wait*	
	305	612	306	PIX	*Wild Wild West*	(7:20) *Cold Comfort* (1989, Suspense)			*Clue* ★★ (1985, Mystery) Eileen Brennan.			*The Astronaut's Wife*	

GlobalStyle

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critics'corner

Fringe
While investigating a string of bank robberies, Olivia, Walter and Peter find one of the suspects trapped inside a vault as if the wall had solidified around him, leading them to believe that a group of thieves has found a way to defy the laws of physics. And Walter realizes the thieves are after something of his in "Safe." 9:01 PM on ACH-B FOX

Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town
A mailman explains where Santa Claus came from in this animated special from 1970. The future jolly old man is a foundling left on the doorstep of the Kringles, a family of toymakers. They name him Kriss, and he'd like nothing more than to give toys to youngsters, but mean Burgermeister Meisterburger will have none of that. 8 PM on ABC

The Rookies
Rookie Vincent Capo went from being a chef to becoming a police officer in less than a year. His desire to help his community pushed him from a job behind the scenes to one in the spotlight. His F.T.O., Mike Pizzolato, is concerned his shyness and difficulty in communicating will hold him back. 11:30 PM on A&E

Armani denied hotel buyout
Fashion designer Giorgio Armani has had his multimillion-dollar offer to purchase top London, England, hotel The Berkeley rejected. IMDB.COM

Celebrity Buzz

Hubby says he'll leave Winehouse 'out of love'

MARRIAGE Amy Winehouse's husband says he wants out of their marriage — for her sake, People.com reports.

"I have to let her go to save her life," Blake Fielder-Civil — who is currently in rehab after being released from jail in November — told a British newspaper Sunday. "I am not abandoning her. I am doing this out of love."

During the interview with the News of the World, Fielder-Civil also admits that he "introduced" the 25-year-old Winehouse to crack and heroin.

The former video production assistant — who wed Winehouse in 2007 — denies being after the singer's money and says he will not "fight her for anything."

Winehouse's U.K. spokesman, Chris Goodman, says he is unaware of anything formal underway to end the marriage.

Winehouse has not visited her husband at the rehab centre where he was sent as a condition of his early release. He spent almost a year behind bars after pleading guilty to charges of assault and attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Meanwhile, Goodman tells People that the singer remains hospitalized at a London clinic and is "doing fine." The rep says she is being seen as part of her ongoing medical care.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

No, Naomi's not getting married

MARRIAGE Naomi Campbell's representative has dismissed reports she's to wed her boyfriend, Vladimir Doronin, in a secret December ceremony in Russia, imdb.com reports.

Campbell sparked rumours of an engagement after she was pictured at a Moscow party sporting a large emerald sparkler on her ring finger.

British tabloids are now claiming Campbell is planning a small, low-key wedding, after reportedly inviting close friends and family to join the couple for a special Christmas vacation.

"Naomi asked them to save the date and be prepared to travel to Russia," a source tells the Sunday Mirror. "She's keeping tight-lipped about exactly what is happening — and has sworn everyone to secrecy."

Campbell's spokesman has denied the claims, saying, "She has no plans to be in Russia at that time."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Hudson once 'stalked' a crush

DATING Kate Hudson once "stalked" a man she was desperate to date, and even recruited her friends to help her track the unwitting suitor down, imdb.com reports.

The actress confesses she was so obsessed with an unnamed bachelor, she tried to manipulate meetings in the hope he would ask her out.

She doesn't reveal if her tactics worked, but admits, "I did go through this stalker phase. I was completely crazy about this one guy and used to drive by his house and get my friends to call me up if they saw him in a restaurant so I could show up."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Cruise admits to erratic behaviour

PEOPLE Tom Cruise was stunned by the barrage of criticism he received after his infamous couch-jumping interview with Oprah Winfrey but admits he could have "handled things better," femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The actor came under fire after his bizarre appearance on the daily talk show in 2005, as he jumped up and down on the sofa, declaring his love for new girlfriend Katie Holmes.

A whirlwind of bad press erupted following the incident, especially surrounding his links to the controversial Scientology faith and his comments against actress Brooke Shields' decision to take medication to battle her post-natal depression.

Cruise admits to Britain's Daily Mirror that his behaviour was bordering on erratic, and that he didn't "handle" the situations he found himself in with enough control.

"There are things that I could have done better. I could have handled things better," he says.

However, Cruise insists the negative press made their relationship stronger.

"Going through that stuff is not pleasant, and I think it hit an extreme, but Kate's a very sure and confident and strong woman. She gets it, you know."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Bloom denies engagement

RELATIONSHIPS Orlando Bloom and his girlfriend Miranda Kerr have denied they are engaged following a flurry of rumours about an imminent wedding, imdb.com reports.

The actor was reported to have proposed to the model before jetting off on a romantic break in Venice last week.

But a representative for Kerr has refuted the claims, insisting the couple aren't planning on walking down the aisle any time soon.

"These rumours are not true," the rep tells People.com. "The story is completely false and misleading. Miranda herself has clearly stated she is not engaged. There is nothing else to be said."

The pair went public with their romance earlier this year.

Bloom has previously dated stars including Kate Bosworth and Kirsten Dunst.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Diaz avoided ex's new flame Biel?

RELATIONSHIPS Cameron Diaz deliberately avoided Jessica Biel at the CNN Heroes: An All-Star Tribute, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The actress rushed through the back entrance of Los Angeles' Kodak Theatre on Friday to avoid running into Biel who is dating Diaz's ex-boyfriend, singer Justin Timberlake.

"It was a careful tango to make sure they weren't backstage at the same time," a source said.

Biel, who was accompanied by her father Jonathan, presented one of the prizes at the ceremony, which recognizes people who have shown bravery and dedication in the face of adversity.

Diaz reportedly blew up at Biel at the 2007 Golden Globe Awards after she spotted her flirting with Timberlake soon after they had split.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Can't believe I was fat: Lake

PEOPLE Ricki Lake has trimmed 140 pounds from her all-time top weight of 270 pounds — and says she is holding steady, People.com reports.

"I can't believe I was a fat person for most of my life," the former talk show host said. "I didn't have surgery and I worked hard. There's no secret. I'm active. I watch what I eat."

But she's certainly not immune to the pressure to stay thin.

"According to Hollywood standards, I'm not a thin girl. I'm a normal girl," said the mom of two boys, Milo, 11, and Owen, 6. "I don't want to perpetuate that obsession but yet I am also guilty of wanting ... to lose weight.

"I'm just grateful that I have sons and not daughters because it's that much harder," she added.

Lake sticks to meals delivered by a service called Fresh Dining ("It's organic, it's fresh, and I still love it," she said) but admits unpredictable factors in life could one day interfere.

"With the weight stuff I don't have any answers," she said. "Something tragic in my life could happen and I could balloon and gain weight. I can't promise I will be like this forever."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Dogs before men in Bosworth's bed

RELATIONSHIPS Actress and animal lover Kate Bosworth insists she would kick a man out of her bed rather than disturb her beloved pooch Lila, who shares her bed, imdb.com reports.

"My boyfriend (model James Rousseau) found that odd," she admits, "(But) the dog will stay in the bed before the man will," she said.

GETTY IMAGES

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Love talks weight battle

HEALTH Courtney Love wanted to have a gastric band fitted, but was refused by doctors, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The former Hole singer, who recently lost a dramatic amount of weight, prompting surgery rumours, admits she was keen to undergo the procedure after becoming depressed about her ballooning weight.

"Baby, if I could get a gastric band I would! I've heard it's a lot of vomiting and a pain in the ass, but it's still easier than a diet. I did go to see a Hollywood doctor about it. I wasn't desperate, I just knew I had to do something. He said no," Love said. "I might have been fat, but I wasn't that fat. I tried liposuction on my stomach after that. It was horrible and it didn't work."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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*Includes all taxes and freight. Prizes may not be exactly as shown.

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Today Variable 2° / -2°
Wednesday Cloudy 3° / 1°
Thursday Rain and snow 60% 5° / -4°

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Take Five

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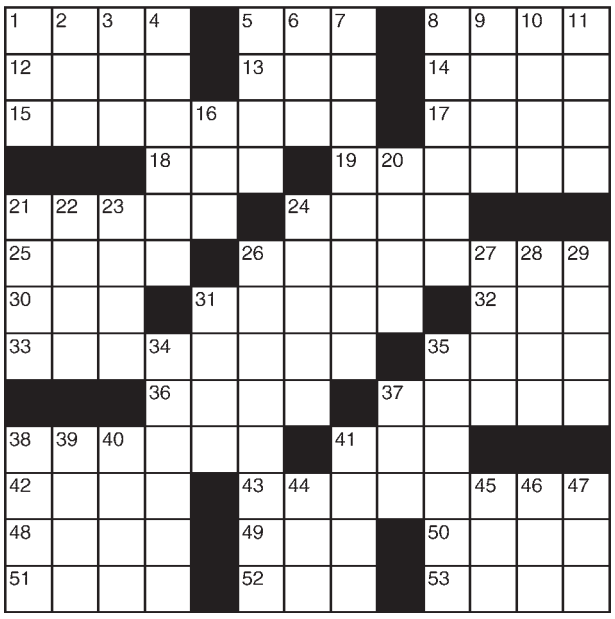

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

	3	7	4		5			2
	9	5						4
8			6					
3	6				8			
	7	2				1	3	
			1				9	6
					1			9
1						6	5	
7			9		4	3	2	

Crossword across

1 Eastern potentate (Var.)
5 Snoop Dogg's genre
8 Lend a hand
12 Protuberance
13 Chicken-king link
14 October birthstone
15 Seeker of an honest man
17 Spanish artist Joan
18 Ovum
19 Mucilaginous
21 California city
24 MGM mascot
25 Suggestion
26 God of wine
30 Toward the stern
31 Foolish one
32 Unclose, in verse
33 Bishops' jurisdictions
35 — gin fizz
36 Cupid's specialty
37 Fair of hair
38 Guru
41 "—, a deer, ..."
42 Last notice
43 Dry ice and others
48 Parker House, e.g.
49 Very long time
50 Long cut
51 Elbow counterpart
52 Geneticists' abbr.
53 Promote in a big way

Crossword down

1 Moreover
2 Miss Piggy's pronoun
3 Altar affirmative
4 Sovereign's sub
5 Pealed
6 Pub order
7 Soap that debuted in 1999
8 Grits makeup
9 Grand story
10 Caprice
11 Stratagem
16 Id counterpart
20 Broadway award
21 Actor Everett
22 Stereo setup
23 Grooving on
24 Eye cosmetic
26 Mess
27 Unaccompanied
28 "Once — a time"
29 Progeny
31 "Finding —"
34 Bulls, oxen, etc.
35 Santa's transport
37 Carton
38 Robin Williams TV role
39 Black, to poets
40 Cleopatra's river
41 Lady of Spain
44 Charged bit
45 Rotation duration
46 Kreskin's claim
47 That girl

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

R	I	P	■	B	E	A	C	H	■	V	O	L
E	R	A	■	A	N	N	O	Y	■	A	D	O
V	A	L	E	N	T	I	N	E	■	L	O	B
■	■	■	K	A	I	■	I	N	S	U	R	E
A	D	V	E	N	T	■	C	A	N	A	■	■
M	O	A	■	A	L	A	■	S	A	B	L	E
I	L	L	S	■	E	G	G	■	P	L	O	T
S	L	I	T	S	■	A	R	P	■	E	O	N
■	■	D	A	T	A	■	A	L	A	S	K	A
D	R	A	G	O	N	■	C	A	R	■	■	■
O	U	T	■	V	A	L	K	Y	R	I	E	S
U	S	E	■	E	X	I	L	E	■	C	A	P
P	H	D	■	S	E	V	E	R	■	E	T	A

8	2	5	6	4	3	9	7	1
6	1	4	9	7	5	2	8	3
9	7	3	2	1	8	5	4	6
1	8	6	7	2	4	3	5	9
3	4	9	8	5	6	7	1	2
2	5	7	1	3	9	4	6	8
5	3	8	4	9	1	6	2	7
4	6	2	3	8	7	1	9	5
7	9	1	5	6	2	8	3	4

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Under 13 min .....Genius
13-17 min.....Scholar
17-21 min .....Smart
21-25 min .....Not bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day

Vegetable Primavera

INGREDIENTS:
8 oz (250 g) baby carrots
1 cup (250 mL) baby corn
8 oz (250 g) young thin green beans
Salt and black pepper
8 oz (250 g) baby or small zucchini
Small handful of fresh parsley or chervil
1 lb (500 g) fresh ricotta and spinach tortellini
1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
1/2 lemon
1 tbsp (15 mL) whole-grain mustard

METHOD:
1. Put a large pot of water and a kettle on to boil. Preheat oven to 250□F (121□C).
2. Trim carrots, corn and beans, and cut into short lengths (if large). Plunge vegetables into pot of boiling water, add salt, bring back to boil, then simmer for 4–5 minutes, until slightly crisp.
3. Meanwhile, trim zucchini. Cut baby zucchini in half lengthwise, small ones into slices, and set aside. Chop parsley.
4. Lift cooked vegetables from boiling water with slotted spoon, put into a bowl, and keep warm in the oven. Bring water back to a boil, adding more water from kettle if necessary. Add pasta and boil gently for 5–6 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a large pot. Add zucchini and fry, stirring continuously, for 2–3 minutes.
6. Squeeze lemon juice into zucchini, then add drained vegetables, mustard, and salt and pepper to taste. Toss gently.
7. Drain pasta and mix into the vegetables. Turn into a warmed serving dish, sprinkle parsley, and serve hot.

PER SERVING
537 calories, 25 g total fat, 13 g saturated fat, 52 g carbohydrate, 7 g fibre, 26 g protein
SERVES 4

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to **rd.ca** or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**

Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
Set out to achieve the goal of a lifetime. Make your way to higher ground. A boss may try to set annoying limitations.

TAURUS
APRIL 21-MAY 21
You'll believe in miracles. An exceptional person says astonishing things. Someone doesn't understand what moves you.

GEMINI
MAY 22-JUNE 21
You've procrastinated for too long. Refuse to talk until you know the facts. A woman will remind you of an obligation.

CANCER
JUNE 22-JULY 22
Try to comfort a forlorn man. Break free of a repetitive relationship pattern. A difficult task must be mastered.

LEO
JULY 23-AUG 23
Unfair accusations become a cat-and-mouse game. A wish will be granted. Your opinions will frighten someone.

VIRGO
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Move away from a disrespectful youth. An older person seeks freedom. A simple task becomes too strenuous to perform.

LIBRA
SEPT 23-OCT 23
Be strongly principled and a problem will melt away. Hurt feelings result from a memory loss. Eliminate your resistance to good insights.

SCORPIO
OCT 24-NOV 22
Refuse to make decisions about your future. Remain calm when approached by an anxious female. Confirm that no mistakes have been made.

SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23-DEC 21
A persistent dream is a reminder. You may travel in the wrong direction. It's only a matter of time until a woman gives in.

CAPRICORN
DEC 22-JAN 20
Don't leave town for nostalgic reasons. You'll know whether a lie is being told. Save the money that you want to spend on treats.

AQUARIUS
JAN 21-FEB 18
Don't reject an impossible idea. Conflicting signals make you briefly hesitate. Be sure of your feelings before sharing them.

PISCES
FEB 19-MARCH 20
A spiritual quest forces someone to change their behaviour. Clichés will annoy an old busybody. A lack of foresight wrecks plans.

WORDY GURDY®

BY TRICKY RICKY KANE

Every answer is a rhyming pair of words (like FAT CAT and DOUBLE TROUBLE), and they will fit in the letter squares. The number after the definition tells you how many syllables in each word.

1. Get a prize of half a sawbuck (1)
2. Injured movie star Reynolds (1)
3. Coal pit's fork prongs (1)
4. Good-with-tools TV pundit Rooney (2)
5. Strew physical substance of the universe (2)
6. Broadway dancer Gwen's heavy woes (2)
7. On one's patellas handing out poker cards (2)

ANSWERS
1. WIN FIN 2. HURT BURT 3. MINES TINES 4. HANDY ANDY
5. SCATTER MATTER 6. VERDONS BURDENS 7. KNEELING DEALING

12-2-08

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